

VOLUME ONE



Islam In Global History



From the Death of Prophet Muhammed
to the First World War

NAZEER AHMED, Ph.D.

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From the Death of Prophet Muhammed
to the First World War

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Contents

DEDICATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

THE AGE OF FAITH

1.

2.

3.

THE AGE OF SOLDIER EMIRS

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

THE INTELLECTUAL LANDSCAPE

11.

12.

13.

THE EMERGENCE
OF THE TURKS

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

21.

22.

23.

THE
MAGRIB AND SPAIN

24.

25.

26.

27.

28.

ISLAM IN AFRICA

29.

30.

31.

WOMEN
IN A MAN'S WORLD

32.

33.

34.

THE MONGOL
DELUGE

35.

36.

37.

38.

THE SPIRIT
CONQUERS THE
SWORD

39.

40.

41.

42.

THE TURKS
AND THE TATARS

43.

44.

45.

ISLAM IN THE
ARCHIPELAGO

46.

47.

DEDICATION

Dedicated with love

to

The Children of Tomorrow

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was written at the persistent encouragement of my good friend Mohammed Abdul Munim, Editor, Minaret Magazine, New York. It was he who insisted over the years that I write a book on Islamic history from a global perspective.

A work such as this draws its inspiration from sages and great minds who have passed before us. As a person who grew up in the Indian subcontinent, I have assimilated the thoughts and ideas of sages like Allama Mohammed Iqbal, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti and Shaykh Syed Ahmed Sirhindi. The influence of historical figures such as Razia Sultana of Delhi, Moghul Emperor Jalaluddin Akbar and Tippu Sultan of Mysore were a part of my childhood upbringing. I was deeply influenced by the gentle coaching of Ustad Abdul Khayyum in my formative years. Ustad Khayyum had fought in the allied armed forces in the China-Burma-India sector during World War II and through his lectures excited my imagination for events in far-away lands. My father, Abdul Azeem, imbibed in me a deep appreciation of the spiritual dimension of Islam.

The voluminous classics of Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Kathir, available to me in Urdu, have been an inexhaustible source of reference. I have benefited from the advice of Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr of George Washington University, Professor Sulayman Nyang of Howard University, and Professor Hamid Algar of University of California, Berkeley.

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PREFACE

Islamic history is a reflection of its own internal dialectic. The struggles, triumphs and tragedies of the global Muslim community are a result of the choices made by the Muslims themselves over the last fourteen hundred years. When they followed the highest ideals of their faith, they became an example to other civilizations. When they compromised and lost their spirituality and ethical standards, they fell into disarray and surrendered their initiative to other civilizations.

Islam sees its *raison d'être* as the creation of a society enjoining what is noble, forbidding what is evil and believing in God. Muslim life has at its core the imperative of a persistent and continuous struggle to create such a society on earth superseding the more narrow allegiance to race, tribe or national origin. Thus Islam becomes a process wherein tribal or ethnic allegiance is continuously challenged by allegiance to a universal idea. The Prophet Muhammed was himself an embodiment of this struggle, demonstrating through his example the processes and the methods to be used by Muslims and laying out a framework within which this struggle was to be carried out.

Since the death of Prophet Muhammed in 632 CE, Muslims have struggled to live up to this ideal. As has happened so often in history, when sublime ideas find their expression in the matrix of human affairs, they are sometimes compromised. With the passage of time, the Islamic struggle produced universal men and women who became beacons of light to human civilization, as well as some who fell far short of the mark.

Islam is a major force in shaping the modern world. Like a giant waking up from a long slumber, it finds itself stumbling to find its bearings in its first wakeful hour. More than 1.3 billion people, roughly one in five of all humans alive today, subscribe to this faith. And it is the most rapidly growing religion in the world.

Of particular significance is the growth of Islam in America. Estimates vary, but judging by attendance at mosques, there are about 6 million Muslims in the United States and Canada. Although a major portion of this community is made up of immigrants, there has been a steady increase in the number of Americans accepting Islam. The interaction of this large

community with members of other faiths and with the global secular civilization is an important current in contemporary world affairs. Americans have traditionally considered their ideas as rooted in Judeo-Christian teachings. Only recently are they becoming aware of the third, co-contemporary monotheistic faith, Islam and its contributions to the civilization of man.

Islam as a political idea confuses many people. They seek to understand the historical forces that have molded this dynamic faith and its expression in the modern political arena. In the western world, the separation of church and state is explicitly accepted. Not so in Islam, a faith that embraces the totality of human life. Such differences produce a lively dynamic in the interactions between the West and the Muslim world.

Islam came into a world wherein there were already competing visions of the transcendent. These visions were well established in the lands into which the new faith spread. A collision was inevitable. Geography dictated that the first theaters of combat were in West Asia and the Mediterranean, which were dominated by the Persian and the Byzantine Empires. In the first test of wills, the Muslims triumphed, largely because of their own cohesion fostered by an unflinching faith.

As the dust settled and the boundaries between Islam and the neighboring civilizations became stable, there arose the need to define the internal and external interfaces of this dynamic belief system. The Muslim jurists and theologians applied themselves to the challenge with vigor, producing an entire body of legislation, both to manage their internal affairs and to define their interfaces with others. Greek rational thought was first experimented with and then discarded. Indian mathematics and Chinese technology were internalized. New sciences were invented and new disciplines developed. The political world was neatly compartmentalized into Dar ul Islam (the abode of Islam) and Dar ul Harab (the abode of conflict). This compartmentalization served them well for five hundred years in a medieval world wherein interactions between continents were few and far between. The Islamic civilization prospered, developing philosophy, art, history and culture, which it exported to the rest of the world.

This self-contained world was jarred by the Crusader assaults in the 12th century and was rent asunder by the Mongol invasions of the 13th century. Much of the Islamic world was occupied or destroyed. During its hour of

trial, Islam, as a universal faith, demonstrated its resilience and its innate capacity for renewal. The spirituality of Islam, expressed through the great masters of tasawwuf, triumphed. The Mongols converted to Islam and themselves became standard bearers of their new faith. The infusion of Mongol-Tatar-Turkish elements injected a new vigor into the world of Islam and under their protection both Persian refinement and Arab scholarship flourished. Old traditions and new ideas melted together to produce an ecstatic folk Islam that carried the faith to the India-Pakistan subcontinent, Indonesia Africa and Europe. Rich and powerful dynasties arose, like the Great Moguls in India, the Safavids in Persia, Mali and Songhay in West Africa and the Ottomans in the eastern Mediterranean, and left behind a brilliant legacy of literature, art and architecture.

Bonds that transcend the individual hold civilizations together. Faith, kinship and contract are the elements that bind a civilization. These elements make it possible for common people to work together and achieve uncommon goals. What sustained the Islamic civilization was a universal belief in the transcendence of God and the imperative to establish divine patterns on earth.

Towards the end of the 15th century, a new challenge emerged from across the oceans. The Portuguese, with their ship-mounted cannon, blasted their way into the Indian Ocean. The peace that had characterized a vast free trade zone was shattered by the thunder of European guns. America was discovered, the globe was circumnavigated and the world changed. On the heels of these events emerged the new powers of northern Europe, which in due time subdued much of Asia and Africa. England, France and Russia expanded their power, even as the Islamic world lost its focus and recoiled from within. A smugness born of lethargy, excessive religious zeal and neglect of naval technology all played their part. The old Muslim institutions could not compete with the joint stock companies of Europe in their efficiency or efficacy and the Muslims lost the initiative in world affairs to other civilizations.

The colonization of Muslim lands broke the continuity of their historical processes and cultural development. When the age of colonialism receded in the twentieth century and economic domination replaced political control, the Islamic people were ill prepared to pick up the pieces and resume their historical march alongside their European counterparts. While

technology transformed the world and shrank it into a global village, Muslims woke up disoriented in an age of discontinuity. A cultural fossilization resulted wherein they found themselves living simultaneously in different ages, some in the twentieth century, some in the “glorious” classical era of Islam and some in the age of the Prophet. The convulsions in the Islamic world today are largely a reflection of this state of confusion.

The discontinuity created by the colonial era has made the challenge of defining the interface of Islamic civilization with the global secular civilization that much more difficult. Islam is not alone in this endeavor. The other major religions of humankind find themselves confronted with a similar challenge. Islam, like other world religions, must re-establish an historical sense of continuity so that it can take its place in the onward march of human civilization.

This book captures the milestones in the struggle of the great Islamic community to find its place in the world of man. The treatment is kept global and universal because in the words of Mohammed Iqbal, the celebrated philosopher of the East, “Islam is like a balloon. When it is squeezed in one place, it bulges out in another”. Islam is a global endeavor. It has its followers in every corner of the globe. Quite emphatically, it is not just a religion of the Middle East. The Muslim world, extending from West Africa to the Indonesian islands, is like a continuous tapestry with localized designs inserted into it. The events in one part of the Islamic world invariably influence developments in another. Islamic history cannot be understood through the narrow lens of regional histories. Without a global approach, the questions relating to the Islamic world cannot even be formulated correctly.

The storms that become manifest as critical moments in history are first played out in the minds of men and women. It is in the minds—and hearts and souls—of humans that lust and passion, love and hatred, power and prejudice, greed and benevolence are first sorted out. When these conflicts are projected on the world plane, facts are created and the canvas of history rolls forward offering new possibilities for human action. This book is an attempt to catch a glimpse of those storms and their aftermath for human history.

In an effort of this scope, there is the risk that depth is compromised. This has been mitigated by a sharp focus on events, personalities and movements

that have influenced the flow of Islamic history from the death of the Prophet to the First World War.

History is a universal enterprise that seeks to teach the lessons of the past so that we can understand the present and improve the future. To quote the 14th century historian of the Maghrib, Ibn Khaldun, “The science of history is a noble, useful and honorable discipline because it shows us the character and events of previous generations. It throws light on the paths of the Prophets and informs us of the condition of rulers in the context of politics and governance so that if one wants to follow them, one may use history as a guideline.”

This work is part of an ongoing attempt to develop a comprehensive Encyclopedia of Islamic History. It is being translated into Urdu and separate editions are under consideration for India and Pakistan. It is hoped that this volume, covering the period from the death of the Prophet to the First World War, will serve as a useful instrument in furthering an understanding of the processes that have shaped and continue to shape Islamic history.

Nazeer Ahmed, Ph.D.

Palos Verdes Estates, CA

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THE AGE OF FAITH

Summary

Islam burst upon the global scene in the 7th century and transformed a nomadic people into prime movers of a world civilization. Prophet Muhammed was the architect of that transformation. His death in 632 presented the Islamic community with its first major challenge. The Muslims met this challenge by establishing the institution of the Caliphate and affirming the continuity of historical Islam. The nascent Islamic state, with its capital at Madina, successfully defended itself from the predatory reach of the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires. But that very success sowed the seeds of dissension in the community. The captured wealth of Persia brought greed and nepotism and resulted in the assassination of the third Caliph Uthman bin Affan. The fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib tried to stem the tide of corruption and return to the pristine purity of faith but he was swept away by the whirlwinds created by the assassination of Uthman. With the death of Ali, the curtain fell on the age of faith in Islamic history.

1.

The Death of Prophet Muhammed

Civilizations are tested with crises just as individuals are tried with adversity. It is these critical moments that bring out the character of a civilization, just as individual tests bring out the character of an individual. Great civilizations measure up to their challenges and grow more resilient with each crisis, turning adversity into opportunity. It is much the same way with individuals. Critical moments in history test the mettle of humans. Great men and women bend history to their will, whereas weaker ones are swallowed up in the convulsions of time.

It is a basic premise of this book that the primary dialectic of the world of Islam is internal. Its triumphs and tribulations are tied inextricably with how this universal community of believers has held onto the transcendental values taught by the Prophet. It is the cohesiveness or internal divisiveness of this global community that has determined its tryst with destiny. When the followers of Islam held onto the Divine injunctions of the Qur'an and the legacy of the Prophet, they triumphed. When they lost sight of that legacy, they fell into disarray and were marginalized by history.

The death of Prophet Muhammed was the first historical crisis faced by the Islamic community. The process by which the community met this crisis has determined its strengths and its weaknesses in the subsequent centuries. The shape of the historical edifice of Islam was cast in that hour. The death of the Prophet brought forth the towering personalities of Abu Bakr as Siddiq, Omar ibn al Khattab, Uthman bin Affan and Ali ibn Abu Talib into the historical process. What these Companions did and did not do has influenced the course of Islamic history in the subsequent 1,400 years.

The Prophet was the fountainhead of Muslim life. No other person in history occupied a position in relation to his people, as did Prophet Muhammed with respect to his. He was the focus for all social, spiritual, political, economic, military and judicial activities. He was the founder and

architect of the nascent community. He was the Prophet and the Messenger of God. When he passed away, he left a vacuum that was impossible to fill. His legacy was tested immediately upon his death.

At stake was the continuity of the historical process. The Prophet had welded together a community of believers transcending their allegiance to tribe, race or nationality. The glue that had cemented this process was the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Now the Prophet was gone and it seemed that the divisive forces that Islam had overcome would resurface and tear apart the newborn community.

The first reaction to the death of the Prophet was shock, disbelief and denial. So great was the love of the Companions for the Prophet that they could not part with their love. So central was he to the life of the community that they could not imagine a life without his presence. When Omar ibn al Khattab heard that the Prophet had passed away, he was so distraught that he drew his sword and declared: "Some hypocrites are pretending that the Prophet of God—may God's peace and blessing be upon him—has died. By God I swear that he did not die; that he has gone to join his Lord, just as other Prophets went before. Moses was absent from his people for forty nights and returned to them after they had declared him dead. By God, the Prophet of God will return just as Moses returned. Any man who dares to perpetrate a false rumor such as Muhammed's death shall have his arms and legs cut off by this hand." People listened to Omar, too stupefied to believe that the man who had transformed Arabia from the backwaters of history to the forefront of the historical process was dead. The situation was grave indeed.

The resilience of Islam showed itself in the person of Abu Bakr. After confirming that the Prophet had indeed passed away, he entered the mosque where Omar was speaking to the people and recited the following passage from the Qur'an: "Muhammed is but a Prophet before whom many prophets have come and gone. Should he die or be killed, will you give up your faith? Know that whoever gives up his faith will cause no harm to God, but God will surely reward those who are grateful to Him" (Qur'an, 3:144).

It was as if the people had heard this passage for the first time; it struck them like a bolt of lightning. Omar related later that when he heard it, his legs shook as he realized that the Messenger of God had indeed departed

from this world. The mortality of the Prophet was established, while the transcendence of God was reaffirmed. The civilization of Islam was to be God-centered, not man-centered. Islam was to have its anchor in God and His Word. The Prophet, as the man who had brought the Divine Word and fulfilled his historical mission, had departed, but the light that had shone through him was to show the way to succeeding generations. Islam retained its transcendent character. It was to survive the physical absence of the Prophet and was to hurl itself as a dynamic force into the historical process.

The situation was fluid, uncertain and fraught with grave risks. The body of the Messenger who had led one of the greatest spiritual revolutions known to humankind was in the corner of a small room. Here was the man who had transformed a tribal society into a community of believers and made them masters of their own destiny. Wave after wave of men moved past the body, sobbing, shaking their heads, unsure of the future. They were now without the anchor that had supported them, without the leader who had sustained them, without the teacher who had taught them, without the statesman who had led them, without the Prophet who had brought the message of Divine transcendence.

The process of succession and its legacy for future generations were at stake. Islam had set for itself a mission to create a global community enjoining what is right, forbidding what is evil and believing in God. How was this mission to be fulfilled in the matrix of history without the physical presence of the Prophet? How was the edifice of a

God-conscious community to be erected without the architect who had conceived it? Did the Prophet leave behind specific instructions on the issue of succession? If he did not, what was the wisdom behind that decision?

Immediately upon the death of the Prophet, competing positions emerged regarding the issue of succession. The first position was that of the Ansar, the residents of Madina who had provided protection and relief to the Muhajirs from Mecca. They felt that as the hosts who had stood by the Prophet at the hour of need, they deserved the leadership of the community. At the minimum, they argued that leadership should be shared. They proposed a committee of two, composed of one person from the Muhajirs and one from the Ansar, to lead the community. The second position was that of the supporters of Abu Bakr as Siddiq. They based their position on the fact that the Prophet, when he had become too ill before his death to

lead the congregational prayers, had nominated Abu Bakr as the Imam. Abu Bakr was the first man to accept Islam and was also one of the closest of his Companions. The authentic ahadith confirm the highest affection and esteem that the Prophet had for Abu Bakr. The third position was that of the supporters of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Ali was a cousin of the Prophet and was married to Fatimat uz Zahra, beloved daughter of the Prophet. He was the first youth to embrace Islam and the Prophet had referred to him as his heir and his brother. The Islamic community reconciled the first two positions in the first hours following the death of the Prophet but differences of opinion remained on the third issue. These differences led, in later years, to the Shi'a-Sunni schism, which runs like a great earthquake fault through Islamic history. Its recurrent divisive and destructive power shows itself at critical moments such as the massacre at Karbala (680), the Battle of Chaldiran (1517) and the Iran-Iraq war (1979-1987).

There was wisdom in the decision of the Prophet to leave the issue of succession to the collective judgment of the community. A universal religion must have validity for all peoples and at all times. It must have relevance to the people of the 21st century as it did to those who lived at the time of the Prophet. It must have meaning to the most sophisticated person as well as to the bushman in the jungle. The wisdom of the Prophet lies in the fact that whereas the principles of Islam are spelled out in their complete form in the Qur'an and are exemplified in the Sunnah of the Prophet, their implementation at specific times and in specific locations is left to the historical process. In other words, Islam is an existential religion. Its realization and fulfillment is a process that is eternal and incumbent upon each generation of believers. The position that the Prophet left specific instructions on the issue of political succession does not correlate with the existential aspects of Islam. However, not all Muslims share this view. Partisan positions on the issue of succession are taken based only on those ahadith which support that position. But history is a merciless judge. With the passage of time, the differences on the issue of succession were solidified, leading to recurrent dissension, rebellion, repression and civil war.

Urged by the community leaders to prevent an open rift, Abu Bakr, along with Omar ibn al Khattab, proceeded to the courtyard of Banu Sa'ida where the Ansar were holding a congregation to elect their leader. One of the

Ansar put his position thus: “We are the Ansar—the helpers of God and the army of Islam. You, the Muhajirun are only a brigade in the Army. Nonetheless some amongst you have gone to the extreme of seeking to deprive us of our natural leadership and to deny us our rights.” Abu Bakr spoke to the Ansar: “O men of Ansar! We, the Muhajirun were the first to accept Islam. We enjoy the noblest lineage and descent. We are the most reputable and the best esteemed as well as the most numerous in Arabia. Furthermore, we are the closest blood relatives of the Prophet. The Qur’an itself has given us preference. For it is God—may He be exalted in praise—Who said, “First and foremost were al Muhajirun, then al Ansar and then those who have followed these two groups in virtue and righteousness.” Then taking the hands of Omar and Abu Ubaida, who were seated on either side of him, Abu Bakr said, “Either one of these two men is acceptable to us as leader of the Muslim community. Choose whomever you please”. At this time Omar raised the hand of Abu Bakr and said, “O Abu Bakr! Did not the Prophet command you to lead the Muslims in prayer? You, therefore, are his successor. In electing you, we are electing the best of all whom the Prophet of God loved and trusted”. The Ansar and the Muhajirun then stepped forward and took the oath of allegiance (baiyah) to Abu Bakr.

Thus it was that the Muslims resolved the issue of succession and embarked on constructing the edifice of their history. The process did not quite satisfy Ali ibn Abu Talib, Talha ibn Ubaidallah and Zubair ibn al Awwam. Ali, representing the family of the Prophet, was busy with the funeral preparations. Talha and Zubair were not in the preliminary consultations. Initially, Ali withheld his oath of allegiance. But when Abu Sufyan approached him to declare himself the Caliph, Ali saw the dangers of division in the community and accepted the Caliphate of Abu Bakr. According to Ibn Khaldun, Ali ibn Abu Talib took his baiyah forty days after the death of the Prophet. According to Ibn Kathir, this happened only after the death of Fatima, six months after the Prophet’s death. Talha ibn Ubaidallah and Zubair ibn al Awwam gave their baiyah soon thereafter.

The Shi’a chroniclers do not accept the majority version, maintaining instead that the Caliphate was rightfully Ali’s by deputation from the Prophet. However, there is consensus among all chroniclers that any differences regarding the issue of succession were quiescent during the time of Abu Bakr and Omar and did not surface in the open until the Caliphate of

Uthman. It was much later, as positions hardened during the Umayyad (665-750) and Abbasid (750-1258) dynasties, that both sides advanced doctrinal arguments to support partisan opinions on the Caliphate and Wilayat / Imamate. Thus it was that Shi'a-Sunni differences were based not on religion or faith but had their origin in the politics of succession and history.

Some sufis attach yet another dimension to the issue of succession. The sufis represent the spiritual and esoteric dimension of Islam. Their enormous impact profoundly influenced the course of Islamic history. In their vision, the spirituality of humankind revolves around a Qutub in every age. The word Qutub means pivot, pole, chief and leader. When there is a Prophet on earth, he is the Qutub. He cleanses the consciousness of humanity so that it becomes worthy of receiving Divine Illumination. Moses was the Qutub for the spirituality of humankind when he was alive, as were David, Solomon, Joseph and Jesus in their times. As long as Muhammed was alive, he was the spiritual pole for humankind. Upon his death, the mantle of spirituality passed on to Fatima, daughter of the Prophet. After Fatima, the mantle passed on to Ali ibn Abu Talib. Most sufi orders claim their spirituality from Ali and by virtue of continuity, through Fatima and ultimately from Prophet Muhammed. As long as Fatima was alive, the sufis maintain, Ali could not have given his baiyah to Abu Bakr. It was only after Fatima passed away, six months after the Prophet's death, that Ali finally gave his allegiance to Abu Bakr. According to this view, the mantle of spirituality continued to reside in Ali ibn Abu Talib to whom important juridical issues were referred by the Caliphs Abu Bakr, Omar and Uthman and even by the faction headed by Muawiya.

In selecting Abu Bakr, the Companions established several precedents. They demonstrated that the Muslims were a living community capable of articulating their own destiny through a collective consultative process in the absence of the Prophet. They established that the Caliph, as the temporal ruler of the Islamic community, had to be a man of piety, trust, knowledge, strength, justice, integrity and righteousness. The community was like a newborn child taking its first breath after being cut off from the umbilical cord connecting it to its spiritual parent.

Upon accession to the Caliphate, Abu Bakr was faced with several crises. The immediate issue was the dispatch of the army to the north to face the

Byzantines. The Muslims had faced a stalemate with the Byzantines at the Battle of Tabuk and had lost their leader Zaid bin Haris. A follow up defensive expedition had been initiated by the Prophet to safeguard the northern approaches to Madina. Abu Bakr reaffirmed the decision of the Prophet and dispatched an expedition under Usama bin Zaid. The expedition was successful and it demonstrated the strength and cohesiveness of the Muslims even in the absence of the Prophet.

The second challenge was the refusal of certain Arab tribes to pay the Zakat. Pre-Islamic Arabia was tribal. Many of these tribes had reluctantly accepted Islam towards the last days of the Prophet. When he passed away, they saw an opportunity to stop paying the mandatory Zakat, which they misunderstood as another form of taxation.

Zakat is not only a moral obligation in Islam; it is also a legal obligation. It is an act of purity. It is regarded as one of the five pillars of Islam and is an article of faith. In Islam, the economic well being of the community is as important as that of the individual. No man's belief is complete unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself. Islam discourages hoarding and encourages sharing and investment. Zakat works to circulate money and operates against hoarding. Wherever the Qur'an emphasizes the establishment of prayer, it also emphasizes the payment of Zakat. Foregoing Zakat would have destroyed the moral foundation of the Islamic state and would have reduced Islam to a litany of personal beliefs and observances.

Abu Bakr conducted a vigorous police action against the non-payers of Zakat. He personally went on several expeditions and brought the rebellious tribes under the authority of the state.

The third crisis faced by Abu Bakr was that of false prophets. Seeing the success and prosperity of the Muslims, many false prophets (and prophetesses) sprang up all over Arabia. Religion was and remains to this day, good business. Many a pretender saw in the success of Islam an opportunity to establish his own religion and get rich in the process. Abu Bakr declared war on the false prophets. He sent eleven expeditions against as many pretenders. Of these the best known was the expedition of Khalid bin Walid against Musailimah al Kazzab, which culminated in the Battle of Yamama. Similar expeditions were sent towards Yemen, Amman and Hazeefa. All of these expeditions were successful.

It was in the campaign against Musailimah al Kazzab that a large number of the Companions of the Prophet perished. Many of them were hufaz (those who had memorized the Qur'an). The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet as the spoken Word, which was then memorized by hundreds of companions. The martyrdom of so many hufaz at the Battle of Yamama was a matter of great concern to the Companions. Upon the advice of Omar, Abu Bakr ordered the writing down of the Qur'an to preserve it, as it was revealed to the Prophet, for all generations to come. The first written copy of the Qur'an is known by the title Mashaf e Siddiqi.

In the geopolitics of West Asia, neither the Byzantines nor the Persians could tolerate an independent, united and strong Arabia. Both powers had coveted the Arabian Peninsula for centuries. The Romans had occupied Syria and Jordan while the Persians had subjugated Iraq, Yemen and Hejaz. To the geopolitical element was now added the religious element. Prophet Muhammed, in fulfillment of his mission as the Messenger of God, had sent greetings to the rulers of the two powers inviting them to accept Islam. Heraclius, the Byzantine chief, had sent a polite reply but had ordered his troops into action on the northern borders of Arabia. Khosroe, the Persian emperor, had torn up the Prophet's letter and had ordered his forces in Yemen to march on Madina and arrest the Prophet. It was to forestall the ambitions of the Byzantines and the Persians that the Prophet had initiated defensive actions to the north and the east. The campaigns undertaken by Abu Bakr against the Byzantines and the Persians were thus a continuation of those that had been started by the Prophet himself.

Political developments in West Asia soon worked in favor of the nascent Islamic state. Persia was in turmoil. There was murder and mayhem in the imperial court. Sheroya, the eldest son of Khosroe Pervez murdered his father and all of his own brothers and usurped the throne. Eight months later, Sheroya died in mysterious circumstances and his infant son was made the monarch. The infant son was also killed and a number of courtiers claimed the throne, only to be murdered one after the other. Finally, the only surviving youngster in the Persian dynasty, Yazdgar, was made the emperor and a woman of the royal household was appointed his regent.

The weakness of Persia created military opportunities for its neighbors. Heraclius, the new Byzantine emperor, waged a series of campaigns (625-635) and won back some of the territories his predecessor had lost to the

Persians. The explosive growth of the Islamic state since the Hijra (622) brought its borders to the River Euphrates, which marked the southwestern boundary of the Persian Empire. The Arab tribes near the Persian border, centered on the town of al Hirah, were restive. They had for a long period enjoyed an autonomous status under the protection of the Persian court. But Khosroe, the Persian monarch, had revoked that autonomy and had turned the areas into imperial colonies. Resentment had built up over increased taxes. Some of these tribes had accepted Islam during the life of the Prophet but had become apostates when he passed away. Abu Bakr was aware of these developments. So, when Al Muthannah ibn Harithah, chief of the Banu Shaiban clan in eastern Arabia, approached him with a proposal to rally the Arab tribes against Persia, the Caliph agreed. Remembering their shifting loyalties, Abu Bakr advised Al Muthannah to recruit only those tribes which had previously not become apostates.

Meanwhile, Khalid bin Walid had completed his operations against the apostate Arabs in eastern Arabia. Abu Bakr ordered him to join up with Al Muthannah. The two together advanced on southern Iraq. An invitation was sent to Humuz, Persian governor of the province, inviting him to accept Islam and join in its global mission. If he refused, he was given the alternatives of accepting the protection of the Muslim state or war. Governor Humuz rejected all of these alternatives and hostilities began. The Arab armies first subdued Khadima (633) near modern Kuwait. From there, they moved on the port city of Ubullah (modern Basrah) near the mouth of the Shatt al Arab. Turning northwards along the western shores of the River Euphrates, Khalid's forces rapidly overcame Persian resistance at Al Hirah and Al Anbar. The Arab tribes of the area welcomed their fellow Arabs as liberators from Persian imperial rule. Khalid's rapid advance had left his northern flank open. This area, called Domatul Jandal by the Arabs, was located near the confluence of Syria and Iraq and was inhabited by Christian Arabs who openly sided with the Byzantines. After subduing Domatul Jandal, Khalid and his troops returned to Mecca and performed the Hajj. When Khalid returned to the battlefield, Abu Bakr ordered him to the Syrian front where a decisive showdown was looming with the Byzantine Empire.

The emergence of a unified Arab state under Islam was no more acceptable to the Byzantines than it was to the Persians. The Byzantines had

probed Muslim defenses at the time of the Prophet in preparation for a possible invasion of Arabia. It was to contain this threat that the

Prophet had conducted the campaign of Tabuk. Continued Byzantine pressure had prompted the Prophet to send an expedition under Zaid bin Haris. As we have already pointed out, the engagement had proved indecisive and Zaid bin Haris was killed in the campaign. The Prophet had organized a second campaign under Usama bin Zaid, but he had passed away before the campaign got under way.

Abu Bakr reaffirmed the decision of the Prophet to send an army to the northern borders. The instructions given by Abu Bakr to Usama bin Zaid, commander of the Muslim forces, are noteworthy for their ethical content:

1. Do not kill children, women and old men.
2. Do not harm the disabled and do not disfigure the bodies of those killed in battle.
3. Do not destroy standing crops and do not cut down trees bearing fruit.
4. Do not be dishonest and misappropriate war booty.
5. Do not kill animals except as is necessary for food.

These injunctions have served, for kings and soldiers alike, as a canonical basis for a Muslim code of ethics during the last 1,400 years.

The campaigns under Usama bin Zaid were also inconclusive. The threat of an invasion from the north grew each day as the Byzantines made preparations for war. Abu Bakr decided to preempt the enemy and ordered an invasion of Syria. An army of 27,000 was assembled and organized into three corps under the overall command of Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah. Abu Ubaidah was personally responsible for the central army corps directed at Syria. Supporting him was a corps headed by Amr bin al As directed at Palestine and one headed by Shurahbil ibn Hasanah directed at Jordan. Initial skirmishes took place at Wadi Arabah and Ghazzah. The three armies then proceeded towards Damascus. The main Byzantine forces under Theodorus, brother of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, blocked the further advance of the Muslim armies in the narrow gorge between Mount Hermon and Mount Hawran.

It was here that Khalid bin Walid won one of his most memorable victories. Marching rapidly westward from Iraq, Khalid overcame minor resistance along the way. Arriving at the battlefield, he moved in an enveloping arc bypassing the Byzantine army as well as the Muslim divisions and attacked the enemy positions from the rear while the main divisions under Abu Ubaidah made a frontal attack. Taken by surprise, the Byzantine columns dispersed. The Muslim armies pursued the Byzantines and inflicted heavy casualties on the retreating foe. Damascus fell in 635. In a few months, the cities of Balbak and Hama were also in Muslim hands.

Heraclius was not willing to concede the strategic province of Syria so easily. He was one of the most respected generals of his age and had defeated the Persians in numerous battles. He raised a new army of 200,000 and marched south along the coast, hoping to reach Beersheba and cut off the supply routes for the Muslim armies. When he heard of this move from his intelligence arm, Khalid made another wide arc and joining forces with Amr bin al As, reached Beersheba and having collected additional troops from the garrison there, marched northwards to meet Heraclius. The two armies met at Ajnadain where the Byzantines suffered another defeat.

Heraclius was now in a perilous military position. His escape routes both to the north and the south were cut off. He ordered his troops to regroup at the banks of the Yarmuk River near the town of Dir'a. Demonstrating his mastery of rapid enveloping movements, Khalid bin Walid bypassed the enemy lines and attacked from the north while the Byzantines faced off the divisions of Abu Ubaidah to the south. As if providence had a say in the matter, a violent sandstorm blinded the Byzantine troops, while the Arabs, used to the desert, took it in stride. Byzantine resistance collapsed.

The Battle of Yarmuk, fought in 636, was one of the decisive battles in history. It marked the end of Byzantine rule in West Asia and paved the way for further Muslim conquests in Egypt and North Africa. Abu Bakr died a few days after the Battle of Yarmuk. He was 63 years old and his Caliphate lasted two years and three months.



Abu Bakr provided the bridge between Prophet Muhammed and historical Islam. Without his leadership, Zakat would have disappeared as an institution and the nature of religion itself would have been altered. The legal basis of the state would have been seriously undermined and the community would have fallen apart. Abu Bakr continued the traditions of the Prophet, avoided innovations, overcame internal dissensions, established the rule of law, suppressed false prophets and successfully defended the nascent state against the Byzantine and Persian Empires. He demonstrated that the Muslims were a living, dynamic community. Under his leadership, Islam embarked on the process of history bereft of its Prophet but animated by the message of the Qur'an and his Sunnah.

2.

Omar ibn al Khattab and the Founding of Islamic Civilization

History bends to the will of man when it is exercised with faith and steadfastness. Omar was one such man. He bent history to his will, leaving a legacy that successor generations have looked upon as a model to copy. He was one of the greatest of conquerors, a wise administrator, a just ruler, a monumental builder and a man of piety who loved God with the same intensity that other conquerors of his caliber have loved gold and wealth. The Prophet planted the seed of Tawhid. At its most elemental level, Tawhid means belief in one God. In its historical sense, it connotes a God-focused civilization, where all human effort is directed towards seeking Divine pleasure. Abu Bakr, with his wise intercession at an historic moment, ensured that the seed did not perish with the death of the Prophet. It was during the Caliphate of Omar that the seed grew into a full-blown tree and bore fruit. Omar shaped the historical edifice of Islam and whatever Islam became or did not become in subsequent centuries is due primarily to the work of this historical figure. Indeed, Omar was the architect of Islamic civilization.

The achievements of Omar ibn al Khattab are all the more remarkable considering that he lacked the advantage of birth, nobility or wealth that some of the other Companions enjoyed. He was born into the tribe of Bani ‘Adi, a poorer cousin amongst the Quraish. In his own words, before he accepted Islam, he was at various times a petty merchant and a shepherd who would often lose his sheep. From such humble beginnings, he rose to weld together an empire greater in extent than either that of Rome or Persia and governed it with the wisdom of a Solomon and administered it with the sagacity of a Joseph.

Upon his election to the Caliphate, Omar was faced with the immediate geopolitical situation in West Asia. The Arabian Peninsula is a vast desert,

except for its southwestern tip near Najran and Yemen, where the monsoons bring in rain from the Indian Ocean and make the area fertile. To the north, the extent of the desert is marked by the Jordan River, which separates it from the hills of Palestine and Lebanon. To the east, its boundaries are marked by the Euphrates. The area between the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris is called the Jazira (island). This area, known in ancient times as Mesopotamia, was called Iraq e Arab in the early Islamic period. The waters of the two rivers irrigate this area and have made it the cradle of civilizations. East of the River Tigris, the land gradually rises into the Persian Plateau leading into the heartland of ancient Fars. The Arabs called this area Iraq e Ajam and it included the Farsi (Persian) speaking areas of Khuzistan, Hamadan, Fars, Persepolis, Isfahan, Azerbaijan, Khorasan, Makran and Baluchistan.

The Persian and Byzantine empires held the balance of power in the region with the Euphrates River as the historical divide between their respective areas of influence. Persia also controlled Yemen and the territories along the Red Sea north to Mecca and Madina. The emergence of Islam and the unification of the Arabs altered this balance of power. It was a situation that neither the Byzantines nor the Persians could ignore. Khosroe, the emperor of Persia, was on record as having ordered an assault on Madina. The Byzantines had attacked on the northern frontier and had killed the Muslim general Zaid bin Haris (632). Border clashes had begun during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr between the newborn Islamic state and the two superpowers. The triumph of Omar over the mighty empires of Persia and Byzantium within a brief span of ten years is one of the most remarkable stories in military history.

The Muslim eruption was impelled by a sense of mission inculcated by Islam. It was a matter of faith. This faith dictated that humankind is born into freedom and is beholden only to the transcendence of God. Islamic civilization is God-centered and its mission is to establish Divine patterns upon this earth. From this perspective, any social or political system that imposed subservience to a despotic ruler or an oppressive empire detracted from this transcendence and deserved to be challenged.

When Omar became the Caliph, the campaigns in Syria were ongoing. The Battle of Yarmuk (636) had broken Byzantine resistance but Palestine was not yet subdued. Omar commanded Amr bin al As to proceed from

Yarmuk to Jerusalem. Since resistance was hopeless, the Patriarch of Jerusalem offered the keys to the city provided the Caliph himself came up to accept them. When the Caliph heard of this, he appointed Ali ibn Abu Talib as the acting Caliph and set out north from Madina. Omar ibn al Khattab was now the Caliph of all Arabia and of surrounding territories. He could have traveled as a conqueror in pomp and luxury. But he, like the other Companions, had received his training from the Prophet Muhammed. Theirs was the kingdom of heaven and not of this earth. They held the key to the treasures of the earth but only as a Divine Trust as servants of the Lord. Omar traveled north on one camel with a single attendant, taking turns with him for the ride. As he approached Jerusalem, it so happened, the attendant was on the camel and the Caliph was walking alongside. The potentates of Jerusalem thought that the rider was the Caliph and the man on foot, in his patched clothes, was the servant. They offered abeyance to the rider. When the Muslim commanders greeted the real Caliph, the potentates of Jerusalem were astonished and bowed down in awe.

Omar treated the conquered people with unsurpassed magnanimity. The capitulation document signed with the Christians upon the fall of Jerusalem provides an example:

“This is the safety given by a servant of God, the leader of the faithful, Omar ibn al Khattab to the people of Ilia. This safety is for their life, property, church and cross, for the healthy and the sick and for all their co-religionists. Their churches shall neither be used as residence nor shall they be demolished. No harm shall be done to their churches or their boundaries. There shall be no decrease in their crosses or riches. There shall neither be any compulsion in religion nor shall they be harmed.”

The document speaks for itself. The Muslim armies were fighting for the freedom of worship, not for religious conversion. They considered it their mission on earth to free humankind from the yoke of exploitation and abuse. The conquered people were regarded as dhimmis (from the word dhimana, meaning trust or responsibility). They were considered a trust not to be violated as has happened time and again in history. Omar stayed for a few days in Jerusalem and after inspecting the army positions in Syria, returned to Madina.

The Byzantines tried to regroup in Egypt and use it as a base to recover Syria. In 641, Omar sent an expedition under Amr bin al As to Alexandria.

The Copts were neutral in this test of strength between the Byzantines and the Muslims. Alexandria fell and the Muslim armies continued their advance as far as Tripoli in Libya.

Meanwhile, the eastern front with Persia was active. The Persians did not take lightly their losses in the border areas west of the Euphrates River. They reorganized, put their western defenses under the famous Khorasani General Rustam and reinforced him with the services of two able officers, Narsi and Jaban. The withdrawal of Khalid bin Walid from the Iraqi front to Syria had weakened Muslim defenses. So, Al Muthannah went to Madina and sought additional troops. Caliph Omar permitted him to raise a new army, allowing for the first time the recruitment of men from the Arab tribes that had at one time become apostates. Abu Obaid Saqafi was selected to lead this new army. Skirmishes started immediately between the opposing forces. Abu Obaid met the Persian officer Jaban at the Battle of Namaraq and defeated him. He followed it up with a victory over Narsi at the Battle of Maqatia. Undaunted, the Persian commander Rustam sent a new army under Mardan Shah and reinforced it with a hundred war elephants. The Arabs had no experience fighting elephant-mounted troops. In the ensuing battle, Abu Obaid was trampled under one of the elephants and the Arab forces were sent reeling back across the Euphrates.

It was now obvious that what had started as a border war had become a test of strength between the Muslims and the Persian Empire. Omar called a meeting of all the Arab nobles for consultation and offered to personally lead a campaign to Persia. However, upon the advice of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Caliph chose Sa'ad ibn Waqqas to lead an army of 20,000 towards Persia. Sa'ad ibn Waqqas was a Companion of the Prophet and a veteran of the Battle of Badr. Among those embarking on the mission were seventy Companions of the Prophet who had fought at the Battle of Badr. The inclusion of Badri Companions increased the fervor of Muslims to a feverish pitch. Even some of the Christian tribes in the border areas offered to support the Muslim army. On the opposing side, the Persian General Rustam was at the head of 50,000 seasoned soldiers.

As directed by the Caliph, Sa'ad ibn Waqqas sent a peace mission to Rustam headed by Muthannah ibn Harith. Rustam, cognizant of the motivation of the Arab soldiers, directed the Arab delegation to Emperor Yazdgard. The Persian Emperor received the Muslims with great pomp and

offered to pay them a rich bounty provided they returned to their homeland. In reply, Muthannah ibn Harith offered the Emperor three choices. One, accept submission to God, become a Muslim and a brother in faith. Two, accept protection of the Muslim state and pay jizya. Three, if the first two were unacceptable, face war. The Emperor was upset at these suggestions, told them he would have them killed were they not on a peace mission and sent them back with a handful of dust from the Persian soil, admonishing that the Arabs would get no more than that pitiful amount of dust from Persia.

War became inevitable and the trumpet was blown. At this juncture, Rustam made a tactical blunder. The Persian soldiers wore heavy armor, unsuitable for warfare in the desert. The Arabs, on the other hand, had no armor and were used to mobile desert warfare. Against his own better judgment, Rustam chose for the upcoming confrontation the plain of Qadasia in the desert, about forty miles from the Euphrates River. The desert heat sapped the strength of the Persian soldiers in their heavy armor. In the initial combat, the elephants in the Persian army created enormous difficulty for the Muslim warriors.

For two days, the battle went on and was indecisive. On the third day the wheels of fortune turned as the Arab soldiers, seeking to neutralize the elephants, shot sharp arrows at their eyes. The injured elephants turned around and dispersed, trampling their own troops. Rustam fought bravely, but was slain in battle.

The Battle of Qadasia (637) was one of the turning points in world history. It marked the end of the Persian Empire and the beginning of the Islamic Empire. Persia became a part of the Islamic world and for fourteen hundred years has been a pivotal region in Muslim affairs.

From Qadasia, Sa'ad ibn Waqqas advanced to the old Biblical city of Babylon, which offered only feeble resistance. The cities of Kosi and Babrasheer followed suit. Madayen, the capital of the Persian Empire, was now within striking distance. The bulk of the Persian army had been lost in the Battle of Qadasia. Yazdgard tried to slow down the advance of Arab troops by destroying the bridge that linked the western shores of the Tigris River to Madayen. These tactics, however, proved futile. The Arabs put their horses into the river, waded across to the other shore and Madayen fell in 637. The treasures of the Persian capital were now in Muslim hands.

Untold amounts of gold, silver, jewels, carpets and artifacts were captured and transported to Madina. Included in the war booty was an elephant that aroused a great deal of curiosity among the ladies in Madina.

Yazdgard fled Madayen towards Merv, in northeastern Persia. Realizing that the war with the Muslims was not just a skirmish but a full-scale invasion, he called on all Persians and their allies to defend Persia. A huge army of 150,000 was assembled and put under the command of Mardan Shah who had already seen action against the Arabs at the Battle of the Euphrates. To inspire the Persians, Mardan Shah was vested with the durafsh, the national emblem of Persia. The governor of Kufa, Ammar ibn Yassir sent this information to the Caliph and asked for additional troops. Omar sent a corps of 30,000 under the command of Numan ibn Muquran. Peace talks proved futile and the two armies met at the Battle of Nahawand. In the initial engagements, Numan ibn Muquran was seriously wounded but the Muslim commanders kept this fact secret from friend and foe alike. Towards the end of the first day, the enemy lines broke and the Muslims were victorious. Numan did not survive his wounds and died that evening.

Persian resistance continued from its eastern provinces. Yazdgard set himself up in Merv and took personal command of his forces. Realizing that an injured enemy is a dangerous enemy, Caliph Omar resolved to put an end to all Persian resistance. From Nahawand, the Arab armies split up, and mounted a multi-pronged drive against Persian strongholds. Abi al Aas captured Persepolis. Aasim ibn Amr took Sistan. Hakam ibn Umair conquered Makran and Baluchistan. Azerbaijan fell to Othba ibn Farqad. Buqair ibn Abdulla subdued Armenia. A contingent under Ahnaf ibn Qais marched on Khorasan. By the year 650, the Persian Empire was completely under the control of Arab armies. Yazdgard fled Persia and died in exile.

Within a decade after the election of Omar ibn al Khattab as the Caliph, the map of West Asia and North Africa had changed. Madina was now the capital of the largest empire in the world, extending from Tripoli in North Africa to Samarqand in Central Asia. This empire was ruled not by a king or a general but by a revolutionary creed: "There is no deity but God and Muhammed is His Messenger". The Caliph was no more than a servant of God, and the keeper of Divine Laws.

When Caliph Omar was informed of the victories over Persia, he went to the mosque in Madina and addressed the people:

“ O believers! The Persians have lost their kingdom. They cannot harm us any more. God has made you inherit their country, their properties and their riches, so that He may test you. Therefore, you should not change your ways. Otherwise, God will bring forth another nation in place of you. I feel anxiety for our community from our own people”.

These were prophetic words. As we shall see in the next chapter, the riches of Persia did change the ways of some in Madina and led to the civil wars that tore the Islamic community apart.

Omar was a superb administrator. He established a Shura (consultative) council and sought advice on matters of state. He divided the far-flung empire into the provinces of Mecca, Madina, Syria, Jazira (the fertile region between the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq), Basra, Khorasan, Azerbaijan, Persia and Egypt. A governor, answerable to the Caliph, was appointed for each province. The responsibilities and the limits of each governor's authority were clearly defined. Governors who used their office to get rich were severely punished. The executive and the judiciary were separated and kadis were appointed to administer justice.

Caliph Omar had the open mindedness to accept and adopt what was good in other civilizations. Where applicable, he learned from and adopted the technologies and administrative practices of the conquered people. Windmills were in extensive use in Persia at the time and Omar ordered the construction of windmills in several of the Arab cities, including Madina. When Abu Huraira returned with a large booty from Bahrain, there were differences among the Madinites as to how to divide it up. Khalid bin Walid, observing the divisions, suggested to the Caliph that a department of documentation be set up in Madina similar to the ones he had seen in Persia. Caliph Omar inquired about the Persian practices and after satisfying himself that they were indeed applicable to the Caliphate, ordered that a department of documentation be set up. As most Arabs were illiterate, he hired Persian scribes to man this new department. The scribes documented each item of booty and the claims on each, so that the Caliph could equitably divide it up among the claimants. Later, the department was expanded to document all transactions of the treasury and of the army. Following the example of Omar ibn al Khattab, the preparation and maintenance of documentation became an honored profession among

Muslims, and Caliphs and sultans alike, down to the Ottomans in modern times, kept this tradition alive.

It was during the Caliphate of Omar that Islamic jurisprudence and its methodologies based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, ijma and qiyas were fully established. The edicts of Omar, reflecting the consensus of the Companions, provided the foundation for the Maliki School of Fiqh that emerged a hundred years later.

The military was organized professionally. Soldiers were paid and defensive cantonments were established at Madina, Kufa, Basra, Mosul,

Fustat (Cairo), Damascus, Edesa and Jordan. Finance, accounting, taxation and treasury departments were organized with full accountability. Police, prisons and postal units were established.



The land was surveyed and agriculture was encouraged. Old canals were excavated and new ones built. Large areas of land were brought under cultivation. Roads were laid out and were regularly patrolled. A traveler could move with safety all the way from Egypt to Khorasan in Central Asia.

The vast territories of West Asia and North Africa were welded into a free trade zone. Trade fostered prosperity. Education was encouraged and teachers paid. The study of Qur'an, Hadith, language, literature, writing and calligraphy received patronage. Omar was himself a poet of repute and a noted orator. Over 4,000 mosques were built during the Caliphate of Omar.

Technology such as the construction of windmills was encouraged. Old bridges and roads were repaired and new ones built. A population census was taken after the example of the Chinese in the Tang dynasty. And it was Omar who started the Islamic calendar based on the Hijra of the Prophet.

It is reported that Omar wept when the following verse in the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet: "We offered the trust to the mountains, heavens and the earth, but they declined, being afraid thereof, but humankind accepted it, indeed humankind was unjust and foolish"(Qur'an, 33:72-73). Omar understood that the trust referred to here is human free will. Humankind, drunk with the love of God, accepted this trust, while all other creation declined it. When the will of man is exercised in a manner that befits human nobility, it elevates him to a position higher than that of the angels. Humankind has a tryst with destiny, to realize its own sublime nature, in the matrix of human affairs. When free will is abused, it reduces humans to the most wretched of creatures. No man understood this better than Omar and few since the Prophet carried this trust with as much wisdom, humility, determination, sensitivity, persistence and courage. Measured by any yardstick, Omar was one of the greatest figures in human history.

Omar ibn al Khattab laid the foundation of Islamic civilization. He was the historical figure who institutionalized Islam and determined the manner in which Muslims would relate to each other and to non-Muslims and would strive to fulfill the mission of Tawhid on earth.

Ironically, this man of justice was assassinated for a verdict he had given in a civil case brought before him. One of the Companions, Mugheera bin Sho'ba, rented a house to a Persian carpenter named Abu Lulu Feroze. The rent was two dirhams a day, a sum Abu Lulu felt was too high. He complained to the Caliph Omar who gathered all the facts, listened to both sides and gave the judgment that the rent was fair. This seemingly minor incident caused one of the biggest upheavals in Islamic history. Abu Lulu was so distraught at the verdict that he resolved to take the life of the Caliph. The next morning, as Omar appeared at the mosque to lead the prayer, Abu Lulu hid in a corner, his double-edged sword concealed under his long robes. As the Caliph stood at the head of the congregation reciting the Qur'an, Abu Lulu jumped at him and thrust his double-edged sword into the Caliph's stomach. The internal bleeding could not be stopped and Omar,

the citadel of the community of believers, passed away the following day.
The year was 645.

3.

The Civil Wars

Just as a civilization advances by faith and knowledge, it is arrested and destroyed by ignorance and greed. Even as Muslim armies continued their advance towards the borders of India, China and the Atlantic Ocean, the seeds of greed and nepotism were being sown in the heartland of Islam. The booty from Persia was enormous. Untold amounts of gold, silver and jewels were captured from the Persians and transported to Madina. It is reported that Omar was distraught when the riches of Persia were presented to him. “When God grants riches to a nation”, he said, “envy and jealousy grow in its people and as a result enmity and injustice is created in its ranks”. With their spiritual insight, the Companions foresaw what these riches would do to the character of their people. They were opposed to the amassing of wealth that would detract them from the spiritual mission of Islam. For instance, one of the items of booty from Persia was an exquisite carpet called “farsh-e-bahar, (the carpet of spring). It was a possession of the Persian monarchs and was so large that it could accommodate a thousand guests at their drinking parties. Some people in Madina wanted to preserve it. Ali ibn Abu Talib insisted that the carpet be torn up. Ali’s suggestion was adopted and the carpet was shredded. Omar saw to it that the treasury did not become a place for hoarding gold and silver. The gems and jewelry were sold and the proceeds were distributed so that all the people benefited. Capital in circulation grew and trade flourished. Chroniclers record that when Omar ibn al Khattab was assassinated, there was only enough ration in the treasury to feed ten people. The firmness and wisdom that was required to manage the sudden infusion of wealth was gone with the passing of Omar. Within ten years of his passing, the Islamic community was at loggerheads and in the midst of a full-scale civil war.

Next to faith, wealth is the most important engine in the building of a civilization. Properly invested and managed, wealth, as the surplus energy of human effort, propels invention and civilizational advance. When it is hoarded, it leads to economic contraction, breeds jealousy, fosters intrigue, greed, infighting and ultimately destroys a civilization.

We find the origin of the civil wars in the gold of Persia. As long as the towering figure of Omar was present, the pressures that inevitably accompany sudden wealth were held in check. Omar managed the state with justice, firmness and equity. The slightest indication of nepotism was punished. Self-aggrandizement was publicly discouraged. Even a popular and successful general like Khalid bin Walid did not escape chastisement when it was discovered that he had paid a poet for a lyric in praise of his own person (although Khalid was later exonerated when it was determined that he had paid the money from his own pocket).

As he lay on his deathbed, Omar appointed a committee of six to select his successor with explicit instructions that they were not to select his own son, Abdullah bin Omar, or to nominate themselves. The committee consisted of Ali ibn Abu Talib, Uthman bin Affan, Zubair ibn al Awwam, Talha ibn Ubaidallah, Sa'ad ibn Waqqas and Abdur Rahman ibn Aus. Abdur Rahman ibn Aus was charged with taking the pulse of the community regarding the issue of succession. He did so and found that there was widespread support for both Ali and Uthman. Before a large gathering in the Prophet's mosque, the question was put to the two finalists: "Will you discharge the responsibilities of this office in accordance with the Commandments of God, His Messenger and the example of the two Sheikhs (Abu Bakr and Omar)?" Ali was given the first choice. He replied that he would conduct the office in accordance with the commandments of God and His Messenger. The reply was taken to mean that Ali was ambiguous about the legacy of Abu Bakr and Omar. Uthman was then asked the same question and he replied that indeed he would serve in accordance with the commandments of God, His Messenger and the example of the two Sheikhs. Uthman Bin Affan won the nomination and was elected the Caliph.

The question, though seemingly innocuous, was loaded in favor of Uthman. Unless one makes a strong case for historical continuity, they argue that it was unnecessary to include the tradition of the two Sheikhs as a prerequisite to the Caliphate at that juncture.

Uthman was more than seventy years old when elected Caliph. He was a man of piety, a scholar, a man of utmost integrity and humility and one of the earliest companions of the Prophet. He was a man of means and used his wealth with utmost generosity in the service of the Islamic community.

He was married to Ruqaiyya, the Prophet's daughter and after her death to Umm Kulthum, another of the Prophet's daughters. But Uthman was also extremely shy and indecisive. These qualities, which may be innocuous in an individual, were to prove fatal in Uthman as a ruler. More significantly, Uthman belonged to Banu Umayyah. In pre-Islamic times, the Banu Umayyah often competed for power and prestige with Bani Hashim, the tribe to which the Prophet and Ali ibn Abu Talib belonged. These factors became increasingly important as the unity fostered by Islam cracked under the pressures generated during the period of Uthman.

The Caliphate of Uthman lasted twelve years and it may be divided into two distinct phases. During the first six years, the momentum created by Omar ibn al Khattab carried Muslim armies further into Azerbaijan, Kirman, Afghanistan, Khorasan and Kazakhstan in the east and Libya to the west. Several rebellions in Kurdistan and Persia were suppressed.

Two of the initiatives undertaken by Uthman during this period had a lasting impact on Islamic history. It was at the initiative of Uthman that the pronunciation of the Qur'an was standardized. The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet as the Word of God and was memorized by hundreds of hufaz. After the Battle of Yamama when many hufaz perished, Abu Bakr as Siddiq, upon the advice of Omar ibn al Khattab, had the Qur'an written down exactly as the Prophet had arranged it. The book is called Mushaf e Siddiqi. The Arabic language, as it is normally written, does not show the vowels and pronunciation is deduced from the context. Accordingly, Mushaf e Siddiqi did not show any vowels. As Islam spread beyond the borders of Arabia into non-Arabic speaking areas, there was the risk of mispronunciation with consequent misinterpretation. Uthman ordered the preparation of a written copy showing both vowels and consonants, consistent with the recitations of the Prophet. Where the styles of recitation used by the Prophet varied, these styles were so noted.

The second initiative was the building of a navy. Omar had resisted the idea as premature for an Arab army used to rapid movements in the desert. Upon the recommendation of Muawiya, Uthman ordered the building of a powerful navy to check Byzantine power in the eastern Mediterranean. A naval force was built and Cyprus was captured. The continued expansion of the navy provided the capability ten years later for a naval assault on the Byzantine capital, Constantinople (modern Istanbul).

It was during the second half of the Caliphate of Uthman that serious divisions arose in the Islamic community. The shy, retiring and indecisive nature of Uthman was an invitation to mischief-makers. Some among the Banu Umayyah tribe took advantage of this indecisiveness to create huge estates for themselves. Uthman had removed some of the administrators appointed by Omar and had replaced them with men from the Banu Umayyah tribe. Some of these appointees were unqualified for their positions. When the incompetence of these officers was brought to his attention, Uthman often hesitated and corrective action was delayed. Since Uthman himself belonged to the Banu Umayyah, he was vulnerable to charges of nepotism. Pre-Islamic tribal animosities between Bani Hashim and Banu Umayyah, which had been subdued since the time of the Prophet, surfaced once again.

The most important element in the ensuing political instability was the enormous wealth acquired from Persia. Mas'udi records (as related by Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddamah*, page 478, *op. cit.*)

“On the day Caliph Uthman was assassinated, the treasurer had in his personal collection, a sum of 150,000 dinars and 1,000,000 dirhams. In addition, he owned properties worth 200,000 dinars in the valleys of Qura and Hunain in which he kept a large number of camels and horses. One of the properties owned by Zubair was worth 50,000 dinars in which he kept 1,000 horses. Talha derived an income of 1,000 dinars from his properties in Iraq. Abdur Rahman bin Awf had 1,000 horses in his stable in addition to 1,000 camels and 10,000 heads of sheep. Upon his death, one fourth of his estate was valued at 84,000 dinars. Zaid bin Thabit owned bricks of gold and silver which required a large axe to cut. Zubair had constructed multiple houses in Basrah, Egypt, Kufa and Alexandria. Similarly, Talha owned a home in Kufa in addition to an old home in Madina which he had renovated with bricks, mortar and oak timber. Sa'ad bin Waqqas had built a tall and expansive mansion made of red stone. Maqdad built a home in Madina which he had plastered inside and out.”

Masudi goes on to state that this wealth was acquired legitimately through booty and trade. While wealth, legitimately acquired, did not influence the Companions, many others in the community were less sanguine about how the wealth was acquired or how it was used. The new opulence of the community was in stark contrast to the simplicity with

which the earlier Caliphs lived. Omar ibn al Khattab, while he was the Caliph, used to cover the holes in his tattered clothes with patches of goatskin. But times had changed. The infusion of Persian gold changed the character of some of the Arabs. Damascus, which was governed by Umayyad governors, became a city of palaces. An inexorable process of decay had begun wherein the decadence of luxury displaced the ruggedness of nomadic life and took men and women away from the transcendence of the spirit to the pleasures of the flesh.

The increasing corruption gave an opportunity for the propagation of rumors, innuendo and mischief. In this turbulent scenario, two characters stand out as particularly sinister. One was Abdullah bin Saba, a recent convert, who tried to pit Uthman against Ali and incited the people of Kufa (Iraq) and Egypt against Uthman. The other was Hakam bin Marwan, an Umayyad, whom Uthman had appointed as his Chief Secretary. Hakam was responsible for official correspondence and abused this privileged position to misrepresent Uthman at critical moments. The dissatisfaction and disaffection finally erupted in open rebellion. Bands of rebels from Kufa and Egypt entered Madina, surrounded the residence of the Caliph and demanded his resignation. Uthman could not comply with this demand because that would destroy the Caliphate as an institution. He was attacked and mercilessly executed in 655. The civil wars had begun.

Actions that are driven by passions generate similar passions with unforeseen consequences. The assassination of Uthman unleashed chaos in Madina. There was no leadership, no order and no authority in the city. The body of Uthman lay unclaimed for more than 24 hours when a group of Muslims mustered the courage to perform the final ablution and bury the assassinated Caliph in the darkness of night. Only seventeen men attended the funeral. Amidst this chaos, representations were made to Ali ibn Abu Talib to accept the Caliphate. He hesitated, but relented upon the insistence of some of the prominent companions of the Prophet and became the fourth Caliph of Islam.

Ali understood that the assassination of Uthman was a symptom of a deeper malaise. The gold of Persia had created a powerful whirlwind in which the Islamic body politic was caught up. Some of this wealth had found its way to the provincial capitals where it financed an opulent life

style. Those who had become accustomed to this life style were reluctant to change and revert to the simplicity enjoined by the Prophet.

Ali's first priority was to establish order. He desired to achieve it in such a manner that the disease itself would be cured. Realizing that any reform must start from the top, Ali demanded the resignation of the provincial governors. As we shall see, this proved to be a fateful decision. Some of the governors obliged; others refused as an open declaration of rebellion. Notable among the latter was Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan, the Umayyad governor of Syria.

Faith and wealth are two of the most powerful engines of history. We see for the first time after the assassination of Uthman the opposing pull of these two elements. Wealth is like a wild horse. When it is tamed, it moves with grace and gives power to the rider. Untamed, it destroys itself and the rider alike. Faith is the harness that tames wealth. Without the discipline that comes with faith, wealth leads to greed and destroys all that builds a civilization. What was needed after the conquest of Persia was the firmness and decisiveness of someone like Omar. The shy and retiring nature of the third Caliph Uthman was a recipe for disaster. In the latter half of the Caliphate of Uthman, we see how the newfound wealth bred corruption and nepotism, threatening to destroy the very faith that had enabled the Muslims to win the wealth.

Ali, trained as he was by Prophet Muhammed, wanted to re-establish Islamic life after the pristine example of the Prophet. But times had changed. The conquest of the Persian Empire had made some notables enormously wealthy. These notables would rather fight to keep their privileges than surrender. Islam was now a religion as much of this world as it was of the hereafter and had to compete with personal power and prestige for the fealty of people's hearts. The transcendence of the Prophet's example had to now come to terms with the worldly reality of gold and greed.

Faith and greed were locked in mortal combat. Against this background, the assassination of Uthman was an event that provided fuel for the combatants. Ali's priority was to establish order. But many of the Companions desired to settle the issue of Uthman's assassination as the first priority. They demanded qisas (the apprehension and due punishment for

the assassins as prescribed by the Qur'an). To them, justice had to take precedence over order.

So shocked was the Islamic community at the assassination of Uthman that no less a person than Aisha binte Abu Bakr, wife of the Prophet, took up the issue of qisas. Notable Companions like Talha ibn Ubaidallah and Zubair ibn al Awwam joined the fray. In the year 656, Aisha set out from Mecca towards Basra (Iraq) with a force of 3,000 men. This was a grave moment indeed. Here was Ummul-Momineen herself, marching forth to capture and punish the assassins of Uthman and in the process undermining the authority of the Caliphate. A sense of sadness and helplessness overtook the Meccan community. Some joined the fray, including the well known Companions of the Prophet Talha ibn Ubaidallah and Zubair ibn al Awwam. A large number sensed the gravity of the situation and stayed neutral.

The position of Aisha, motivated though it was by a fervent desire to reform the community and punish the guilty, had the effect of creating an armed force independent of the Caliphate and weakening its authority. There cannot be two independent armed forces within one political state. Justice, as demanded by Aisha, was bound to come into conflict with the order that was desired by Ali. The two positions collided at the Battle of Jamal (Camel).

Ali was at first preparing to march on Syria to bring Muawiya under control. But the movement of the Meccan force under Aisha towards Iraq was a disturbance that could not be overlooked. Accordingly, Ali marched towards Iraq at the head of a force of 700 men. This was another fateful decision, for Ali was never able to return to Madina. The wheels of destiny were set in motion. As it approached Kufa (Iraq), Ali's force was reinforced by a strong contingent of several thousand Iraqis. It was only a matter of time before the combined forces of Madina and Iraq under Ali would confront the Meccan force under Aisha.

Dedicated attempts were made to bring the positions of the two sides together to avoid armed conflict. An understanding was indeed reached between the two sides to avoid war and reconcile the community. But there were determined troublemakers among the parties as well. The factions who were responsible for the assassination of Uthman were determined to sabotage the agreement because a peaceful reconciliation would expose them to harsh punishment from both sides. One of these factions, led by a

recent convert Abdulla bin Saba, was particularly active in Iraq and Egypt. Determined to scuttle a peace agreement by any means, the Sabaiites attacked both camps in the darkness of night. In the ensuing confusion each side thought that the other had tricked them. When Aisha mounted her camel to bring the situation under control, her group assumed she had done so to personally lead the charge. General warfare erupted. Thousands perished in a matter of hours. Among the casualties of the conflict was the noted companion Talha ibn Ubaidallah. Another well-known Companion Zubair ibn al Awwam withdrew from the fray but was assassinated on his way from the battlefield. Realizing that as long as Aisha was visible on her camel, the battle would continue, Ali ordered her camel to be brought down. When the camel fell, Aisha's side fell into disarray. Ali decisively won the battle. Aisha was treated with utmost courtesy and was sent back to Mecca under military escort.

The Battle of the Camel was a disaster for the Muslims. It destroyed the cohesiveness of the Islamic community that had been so painstakingly forged by the Prophet. Aisha herself expressed her regret over this battle towards the end of her life. It was the first round in a civil war that rocked Islam and culminated in Karbala. Although Ali decisively won the battle, it weakened his political position and encouraged his opponents to persist in their demands for qisas. The assassins of Uthman could rest assured that they could hide behind one faction or the other and escape punishment. Indeed, Ali was never able to appoint a tribunal to bring the murderers of Uthman to justice.

The Battle of the Camel gave Muawiya added time to prepare for the coming struggle against Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib. The blood stained shirt of Uthman was hung at the door of the Great Mosque in Damascus. People from far and wide would visit the mosque and seeing the blood of Uthman, would weep and take an oath to avenge the blood of the third Caliph. Complicity of Ali in the murder of Uthman was alleged, first covertly and then openly. Muawiya enlisted the support of a well-known orator, Shurahbeel bin Samat Kindi, to spread this accusation far and wide in Syria. By such means, Muawiya succeeded in uniting the Syrians against Ali and built up a solid military force of 70,000 men to face him.

The struggle between Ali and Muawiya was a classic example of a battle between principle and politics. Some Muslims have looked upon it as a

struggle between Tareeqah and Shariah. Others have shied away from examining the conflict at all citing the honor and respect that is due to all Companions of the Prophet. Yet others have maintained that the ijtiḥad (legal reasoning) of both Ali and Muawiya was correct but that of Ali was of a higher order than that of Muawiya. We have taken no position regarding the issue except to cite the historical facts as they unfolded. Ali, whom the Prophet had called “gateway to my knowledge”, was a fountainhead of spirituality, a man of principle, a great scholar, a noble soldier, but was caught up in the political storms generated by the Caliphate of Uthman and his assassination. Muawiya was an accomplished administrator, a superb politician and a determined foe. The two proved to be true to their positions till the end of their lives. Ali, as the legitimate Caliph, desired to establish order first and then attend to other matters of state including the assassination of Uthman. Ali did not succeed in this endeavor and the struggle consumed his Caliphate and his person. Muawiya demanded qisas first, before he would accept the Caliphate of Ali.

On his part, Ali moved the capital of the Islamic state from Madina to Kufa (656) and consolidated his position. He raised an army of 80,000 for the march on Syria. This army was mostly composed of Iraqis, with contingents of Madinites and Persians. Seeing the storms gathering on the horizon, some notable Companions tried to make peace. Abu Muslim Khorasani convinced Muawiya to write to Ali. In his letter, Muawiya offered to take his oath of fealty to Ali if he surrendered the assassins of Uthman. But by now positions had hardened on both sides. Muawiya knew that Ali was politically too weak at the time to fulfill this demand. When the issue was raised before a large gathering at the mosque in Kufa, over 10,000 Iraqis raised their hands and declared that each of them was an assassin of Uthman. The messenger from Syria returned empty handed.

Muawiya, with his Syrian army, was the first to move towards Iraq and occupy the waters of the Euphrates near the plains of Siffin. When the army of Ali arrived at the scene, they were denied water. Ali promptly ordered the Syrians to be expelled and to control the water resources. The Battle of Siffin had begun. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the age. For three months, the Syrians and the Iraqis went at each other with full fury, convinced that their respective positions were correct. Over 40,000 people lost their lives. So great was the bloodbath that many on both sides

wondered aloud if the Muslims would survive if this carnage were to continue.

For a long time, the battle was a stalemate with neither side gaining a decisive advantage. But on the night of Lailat-ul-Hareer (the Night of the Battle), the supporters of Ali attacked with such determined force that the Syrians realized they were on the verge of defeat. It was here that Muawiyah played one more ruse. Upon the advice of Amr bin al As, to whom Muawiyah had promised the governorship of Egypt, the Syrians hoisted copies of the Qur'an on their lances and declared that they would accept the hakam (arbitration) of the Qur'an between the contesting parties. Ali saw through this ruse but was helpless in the face of the determined demand from both sides.

This was one more of the fateful decisions for Caliph Ali. The acceptance of arbitration established Muawiyah as a legitimate contender for power with Ali. The two sides established a tribunal of two persons, one from each party, to decide between Muawiyah and Ali. Abu Musa Aashari, a pious elderly Companion of the Prophet, was selected to represent Ali. Amr bin al As, an avowed partisan, was the representative for Muawiyah.

It was at this juncture that a group from Ali's army walked away. They were called the Al Khawarij (those who walked away, also called Kharijites). The Kharijites were furious because in their view, Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib had committed shirk by accepting the arbitration of men as opposed to the hakam (arbitration) of the Qur'an. And unless he repented, they vowed to oppose Ali.

This was a classic illustration of how the transcendence of divine revelation is compromised when people of limited understanding apply it in mundane affairs. The Kharijites juxtaposed two ayats from the Qur'an and extracted a justification for their ruthless activities. Initially, they forced Ali to accept arbitration on the basis of the Ayat. "If any do fail to judge by what God has revealed, they are wrongdoers" (Qur'an, 5:44). Then they walked away when a tribunal was appointed, basing their position on another Ayat. "Yet those who reject faith hold (others) as equal with their Lord." (Qur'an, 6:1). It was their position that the Qur'an alone was the arbitrator; the arbitration of men was not acceptable.

The arbitrators decided that both Ali and Muawiya were to resign and that a replacement was to be elected by the community. When it was time to make this announcement public, another trick was played. Abu Musa Aashari was asked to speak first and he faithfully announced the joint decision. But when Amr bin al As followed, he changed the story.”O people, you have heard the decision of Abu Musa. He has deposed his own man and now I too depose him. But I do not depose my own man Muawiya. He is the inheritor of Emir ul Momineen Uthman and wants lawful revenge for his blood. Therefore, he is more entitled to take the seat of the late Caliph”. There was pandemonium in the gathering. Accusations flew. But it was too late. When news of this episode reached Ali, he was sad. Amr bin al As returned to Damascus where Muawiya was declared the Caliph (658). Thus it was that during the years 658-661, there were two centers of Caliphate, one in Kufa and the other in Damascus.

This chicanery was unacceptable to followers of Ali and the war resumed. For three years various provinces were contested between Muawiya and Ali, including Madina, Mecca, Jazira, Anbar, Madain, Badya, Waqusa, Talbia, Qataqtana, Doumatul Jandal and Tadammur. At long last both sides seemed to have tired and a truce was declared in 660. Under the terms, Ali retained control of Mecca, Madina, Iraq, Persia and the provinces to the east. Muawiya retained control over Syria and Egypt.

The de-facto partition re-established the historic geopolitical boundary between Byzantium and Persia at the borders of the Euphrates. As we shall see again and again in our exposition of Islamic history, this boundary was re-affirmed by many of the Caliphs and sultans, so much so that the historical experience of the Persians, Central Asians, Indians and Pakistanis of today is significantly different from the historical experience of Syrians, Jordanians, Lebanese, Egyptians and North Africans. Syria and Egypt did not accept the Caliphate of Ali until the Abbasid period (750), whereas Ali was for all times the Caliph, the “Lion of God”, the teacher and mentor for Persians and Persianized Muslims in the east.

The Kharijites were not content to walk away from Ali. They sought to alter the status quo through assassination, murder and mayhem and resolved to simultaneously assassinate Ali, Muawiya and Amr bin al As, blaming these three for the civil wars. As fate would have it, the assassination of Ali was successful. Muawiya escaped with a minor wound. Amr bin al As did

not show up for prayer on the day he was to be assassinated and his designee was killed in his place. Ali ibn Abu

Talib, the Fourth Caliph of Islam and the last in the line of those illustrious men who strove to rule in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet, died on the 20th of Ramadan, in the year 661.

The storms created by the assassination of Uthman bin Affan swept aside the unity in the Islamic community. Ali ibn Abu Talib tried to steer the ship of state in the stormy waters; in the effort, he himself became a casualty. It is said that he is buried in Kufa. But a close scrutiny of the chronicles reveals that his gravesite is not known. It may be in Kufa, or in the desert, or his body might have been shipped to Madina for burial lest the Kharijites destroy it. The enduring tribute that is paid by history to this great man is that all Muslims, whether they call themselves Shi'a or Sunni, Zaidi or Fatimid, accept him as the Caliph of Islam. He is the Qutub, the spiritual pole for the sufis. He was a consummate orator, a tower of steadfastness, a pillar of courage, fountain of spirituality. He was the originator of classical Arabic grammar. The Prophet called him, "my brother ... door to my knowledge". His eloquent sayings, collected under the title Nahjul Balaga, have a universal appeal and a global following. No other person in Islamic history is accorded this honor.

THE AGE OF SOLDIER EMIRS

Summary

The unity that was forged by the Prophet dissolved in civil wars.

Emir Muawiya challenged the Caliphate of Ali ibn Abu Talib and fought him to a standstill. After the assassination of Ali, Muawiya claimed the Caliphate. A consummate soldier, he paid special attention to the armed forces and the borders of the empire expanded in every direction. Muawiya changed the nature of the Caliphate, replacing the principle of consultation and election with dynastic rule. His son Yazid succeeded Muawiya and demanded an oath of allegiance from Imam Hussain, son of Ali ibn Abu Talib. When the answer was negative, Hussain and most of the men in the lineage of the Prophet were slaughtered at Karbala. The tragedy hardened the Shi'a-Sunni split and established a new paradigm of martyrdom in the Islamic body politic. Notwithstanding these internal convulsions, the explosive advance of Muslim armies continued and carried them through North Africa and Spain to the very heart of France. In the east, Sindh and Multan were captured and the forces of the Tang Empire of China were defeated at the battle of Tlas. As the empire expanded, so did the corruption in the ruling circles. People questioned the legitimacy of the rulers. The rulers withdrew from the common man. Taxes on the new converts in Persia and Egypt were unfair and heavy. Attempts by Caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz to bring about reconciliation in the community were short lived and there was an inexorable slide towards a political upheaval. It came in the year 750, when the Abbasid Revolution overthrew the Omayyads and the Caliphate moved from Damascus to Baghdad.

4.

Muawiya, the First Soldier Emir

The civil wars marked a watershed in Islamic history. The curtain fell on the age of the Khulfa e Rashidoon (Rightly Guided Caliphs). Shi'a-Sunni sectarianism, which runs like a giant fault line across Islamic history, surfaced. The border between Persia and Syria was hardened at the Euphrates River. The convulsions gave birth to the Kharijites and their brand of extremism. For these reasons, Muslim historians refer to the civil wars as "fitnatul kabir" (the great schism).

With the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the curtain fell on the age of faith in Islamic history. The Prophet founded a civilization wherein faith was supreme. Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali strove to build upon the foundation laid by the Prophet. Never has there been a time in history as there was for the first forty years after the Hijra. For a brief moment, faith in the transcendence of God ruled supreme over the blade of the soldier and the wealth of the merchant. Madina was the capital of the largest empire the world had known but the rulers walked on earth like mendicants, with the fear of God in their hearts and the vision of the hereafter in their souls.

Even as the faith of Islam spread across the vast continents of Asia and Africa, it was challenged by the power of wealth. The vast treasures of Persia, accumulated over centuries of imperial rule, presented a temptation that some Arabs could not resist. The struggle between faith and wealth surfaced during the period of Uthman and consumed his Caliphate. Ali waged a valiant battle to extinguish the flames of greed and power, but the fire consumed him too. And out of the ashes arose the dynastic rule of the Umayyads.

Emir Muawiya was the first soldier-king in Islamic history. With him, the Islamic body politic came under the sway of dynastic rule. The pattern established by him persisted until the 18th century when the merchants of Europe supplanted the Muslim soldier-kings of Asia and Africa. An

outstanding soldier, a shrewd politician and an able administrator, Muawiya fought Ali to a standstill and declared himself the Caliph in 658. As soon as Ali was assassinated (661) Muawiya made preparations to invade Mecca, Madina and Iraq. Hassan ibn Ali had been elected the Caliph in Kufa and he marched forth with a force of 12,000 Iraqis to meet Muawiya. But the Iraqis proved unreliable allies and deserted before the battle started. At the Treaty of Madayen (661), Hassan abdicated the Caliphate in favor of Muawiya in return for general amnesty and an annual stipend of 200,000 dirhams. He retired to Madina to live there as a great teacher and imam. The abdication brought to an end the first phase of the civil wars that began with the assassination of Uthman. It also consolidated the power of Muawiya over all Muslim territories.

With the Treaty of Madayen, power passed from Bani Hashim of the Quraish to Banu Omayya, another branch of the Quraish. In pre-Islamic days, the Bani Hashim were the custodians of the Ka'ba whereas the Banu Omayya were rich merchants and were responsible for the defense of Mecca. In modern language, the Bani Hashim were the priests, whereas the Banu Omayya were the merchants and soldiers. Prominent members of Banu Omayya (such as Abu Sufyan) were bitterly opposed to the mission of the Prophet in the early days of Islam but had embraced the new faith after the conquest of Mecca (628). The Prophet had sought to weld together the two tribes under the transcendence of Islam. The newfound unity survived through the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and Omar. But with the Caliphate of Uthman, himself an Omayya, the old rivalry surfaced again. As we have pointed out, certain members of Banu Omayya took advantage of the pious and retiring nature of Uthman and grew enormously wealthy. This development opened Uthman to charges of favoritism and ultimately led to his assassination. In the ensuing chaos, Ali had been nominated the Caliph, but Muawiya who was an Omayyad, demanded qisas (retribution) for Uthman's blood before he would accept the Caliphate of Ali. Ali was politically too weak to do this and Muawiya deftly exploited this weakness to incite the Syrians against Ali and wage war against him (the Battle of Siffin).

History repeats itself. Divisions among humankind based on tribes, nations and race resurface time and again. The Banu Omayya, who were merchants and soldiers in pre-Islamic years, benefited enormously from the

conquered gold of Persia. Bani Hashim, on the other hand, tried to keep the Islamic community focused on the rugged simplicity of Islam. The third Caliph Uthman was an Omayyad and a pious, shy, retiring aged man. The power of wealth asserted itself during his time and those who were in a position to exploit this wealth, namely the merchant-soldier class of Banu Omayya, did so. When Ali, a Hashimite, tried to redirect the flow of history towards the pristine purity of Islam, faith collided with greed; the civil wars ensued pitting Banu Omayya against Bani Hashim. The first phase of the civil wars ended with the triumph of the merchant-warrior and the abdication of the rule of faith. An era ended and a new era began.

The civil wars also gave birth to the Kharijites. As we have pointed out, these were disgruntled men who walked out of Ali's camp when he accepted arbitration with Muawiya. Their position, though it was couched in democratic terms, was extremist. They sought to justify their misguided position that Ali had compromised his faith. They also maintained that the Caliphate should be open to any capable Muslim, not just the Quraish. Their methods were bloody and they let loose a merciless reign of terror, indiscriminately killing men, women and children. Both Ali and Muawiya waged war against them. Although defeated time and again, the Kharijites resurfaced in Islamic history as a recalcitrant group for five hundred years. In the 14 th century, they gave up their violent ways and settled down in North Africa. Some historians, among them the great Ibn Batuta who traveled through North Africa in 1330-1334, relate them to the Ibadis who are known for their devout poetry in praise of the Prophet.

The civil wars had arrested the explosive advance of the Muslim armies. With the civil wars at bay, the advance resumed. Muhlab bin Abi Safra captured the frontier areas of modern Pakistan. Saeed bin Uthman captured Samarqand and Bukhara in Central Asia. Uqba bin Nafi raced across North Africa to the Atlantic Ocean. It was this famous general, who upon reaching the ocean urged his horse forward until it could advance no further and then turning towards the sky declared: "O God! Had this ocean not interrupted me, I would have reached the farthest corners of the earth to extol Thy Name". This exclamation captures in a nutshell the motivation for early Muslim conquests. Faith was the propulsive force that provided this momentum. Islam had taught the Muslims that humankind was born into freedom and that a human ought to bow down before God and no one else.

The struggle of the early Muslims was to establish a world order wherein only the name of God was extolled and men and women were freed from bondage to false gods or tyrants who acted as if they were gods.

The most memorable accomplishment of Emir Muawiya was the building of a strong navy to break the stranglehold of the Byzantine Empire in the eastern Mediterranean. A navy was built and Jandab bin Abi Umayyah was appointed Emir ul Bahr, source of the English word Admiral. Rhodes and other islands in the eastern Mediterranean were captured and in 671, Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, was besieged. The siege lasted several months. Byzantine defenses were strong and the Greeks were well versed in the use of naphtha ("Greek fire"), a precursor to modern day napalm. As the siege prolonged, there was an outbreak of cholera aboard the ships and the Muslims had to break off the engagement. It was during this siege that a companion of the Prophet, Abu Ayyub Ansari died and was buried beneath the ramparts of the Fort of Constantinople. Located within modern day Istanbul, the tomb of Abu Ayyub is one of the chief attractions of that beautiful city.

Emir Muawiya was a soldier and he paid special attention to the armed forces. He encouraged innovations in military technology. It was during the reign of Muawiya that Muslim engineers invented the "Minjenique" (machine) to propel large stones onto enemy ramparts. He modernized the army, introducing specialized units for desert combat and snowy terrains. New forts were built. Muawiya was the first ruler to mint coins with Arabic inscriptions, displacing Byzantine and Persian coins, thereby reasserting the fiscal independence of the Muslim state. The city of Kairouan was founded in the Maghrib. Administrative record keeping was systematized. Old canals were re-excavated and new ones dug. The police force was strengthened and the postal system, which was created by Omar ibn al Khattab for military use, was now opened to the public.

Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan was a Companion of the Prophet and on several occasions the Prophet used his services as a scribe of the Qur'an. In this capacity he is respected by all Muslims. It is his role as a historical figure where differences arise. While his accomplishments were noteworthy, he is also known as the Emir who condoned the cursing of Ali bin Abu Talib in public, a practice abandoned fifty years later by the Caliph

Omar bin Abdel Aziz (719). Most regrettably, Muawiya imposed his tyrant son Yazid on Islamic history.

5.

Karbala, The Last Breath of the Age of Faith

Very few historical events have shaped the language, culture, music, politics and sociology of Muslim peoples, as has Karbala. Languages such as Swahili and Urdu that were born a thousand years after the event relate to it as if it happened yesterday. A laborer in Kuala Lumpur reacts to it with the same immediacy as a qawwal in Lahore or a professor in Chicago. Karbala is a noun, an adjective and a verb all at once. Indeed, Karbala marks a benchmark in Islamic history and a central hinge around which the internal dialectic among Muslims revolves.

Historically, Karbala was the last breath of the age of faith. Until the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib the issue of succession to the Prophet had been decided through mutual consultation. Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali (the Khulfa e Rashidoon as Muslims generally refer to them) drew their legitimacy from the consent of the people. The process was inherently democratic. Abu Bakr as Siddiq specifically forbade the nomination of his own son as the Caliph after him, thereby avoiding dynastic rule. Omar ibn al Khattab, in his last will, nominated a council of six of the most respected Companions to choose his successor. The Companions were cognizant of the pitfalls of dynastic succession and the excellence of rule by consultation and consent. Theirs was the age of faith. The mission of the first four Caliphs was the creation of a just society, enjoining what is noble, forbidding what is evil and believing in God. In this struggle, they took extraordinary pains to ensure that their immediate families did not profit from their privileged positions.

Muawiya bin Abu Sufyan changed this process. Upon the advice of Mogheera bin Shoba, he nominated his eldest son Yazid as his successor. This was an historical benchmark. Rule by consent requires accountability. Rule by a strongman requires force without accountability. The nomination of Yazid destroyed the requirement for accountability. After Muawiya, Muslim history would produce sultans and emperors, some benevolent,

others despotic. Some would declare themselves Caliphs, others would hobnob with Caliphs, marrying their daughters and offering them exorbitant treasures as gifts, but their rule was always the rule of a soldier. The transcendence of the rule of Tawhid and the accountability that went with it came to an end with the assassination of Ali.

Muawiya had wasted no time in extending his hold on the territories formerly held by Ali ibn Abu Talib and Hassan ibn Ali. Iraq was in the juggernaut of Muawiya's police force, so the Iraqis had no choice but to accept the imposition of Yazid. The province of Hejaz (which is a part of Saudi Arabia today and includes the cities of Mecca and Madina) was another matter. Respected personages such as Hussain ibn Ali, Abdullah bin Zubair, Abdullah bin Omar, Abdullah bin Abbas and Abdur Rahman bin Abu Bakr opposed the idea of a dynasty as contrary to the Sunnah of the Prophet and the tradition of the first Caliphs. To convince them, Muawiya himself traveled to Madina. A meeting was held but there was no meeting of the minds. Not to be deterred by this defiant rejection, Muawiya came out of the meeting and declared that the five had agreed to take their oath of allegiance to Yazid. According to Tabari and Ibn Aseer, Muawiya openly threatened to use force if his proposition was not agreed to. The ammah (general population) gave in. Only later was it discovered that the rumor of allegiance of the "pious five" was a ruse.

Muawiya died soon thereafter (692) at the age of seventy-eight and Yazid ascended the Umayyad throne. One of his first acts was to order the governor of Madina, Waleed bin Uthba, to force an oath of allegiance from Abdullah bin Zubair and Hussain ibn Ali. Sensing the imminent danger to his life, Abdullah bin Zubair left Madina for Mecca under cover of darkness and took refuge in the Ka'ba, where he would presumably be safe from Yazid's troops. Hussain ibn Ali consulted with his half-brother Muhammad bin Hanafia and moved to Mecca as well.

Those Companions of the Prophet and other Muslims, who believed that Ali was the rightful Caliph after the Prophet were called Shi' Aa n e Ali (the party of Ali, which explains the origin of the term Shi'a. The term Sunni is of later historical origin). As is recorded by Ibn Kathir and Ibn Khaldun, these Companions was not entirely satisfied when Abu Bakr was elected the Caliph. However, to maintain the unity of the community they supported and served Abu Bakr, Omar and Uthman. When Hassan abdicated in favor

of Muawiya, many amongst Shi' Aa e Ali withdrew from politics. While maintaining no animosity against the power structure which was almost always hostile to them, they accepted the spiritual leadership of Ali's lineage.

Kufa had been the capital during the Caliphate of Ali ibn Abu Talib and members of Shi' Aa e Ali were numerous in Iraq. Hussain ibn Ali received insistent letters from the notables of Kufa inviting him to Iraq and to accept their allegiance to him as the Caliph. As a first step, Hussain sent his cousin Muslim bin Aqeel on a fact finding mission. Muslim bin Aqeel arrived in Kufa and set up residence in the house of a well-wisher, Hani. The supporters of Hussain thronged this residence, so Muslim sent word to Hussain encouraging him to migrate to Kufa.

Meanwhile, Yazid dispatched Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, commonly known as Ibn Ziyad, the butcher of Karbala, to apprehend Muslim bin Aqeel and stop the incipient uprising. Ibn Ziyad arrived in Iraq and promptly declared that those who would support Yazid would be rewarded and those who opposed him would have their heads cut off. Greed and fear of reprisals did their trick. The Kufans made an about-turn and abandoned Muslim. He was attacked and executed by forces of Ibn Ziyad. Before his death, Muslim sent word to Hussain that the situation in Kufa had changed and that he should abandon the idea of migrating there. By this time, Ibn Ziyad's forces had cut the communications of Hussain's supporters, so the second message from Muslim never reached Hussain.

Unaware of the ground situation in Kufa, Hussain started his move from Mecca to Kufa in 680 with his supporters and well-wishers. On the way, news arrived that Muslim had been killed. According to Ibn Kathir, Hussain wanted to turn back but the demand for qisas (equitable retribution) from Muslim's brothers prevented him. He did inform his entourage of the developments and urged those who wanted to return to do so. All but the very faithful, mostly members of the Prophet's family, left him.

Undaunted, Hussain ibn Ali moved forward and was stopped by a regiment of troops under Amr bin Sa'ad at Karbala on the banks of the River Euphrates. A standoff ensued, negotiations took place and Amr bin Sa'ad communicated this to Ibn Ziyad in Kufa. But Ibn Ziyad would accept nothing short of capitulation and Hussain's explicit baiyah (oath of allegiance) to Yazid. Sensing that Amr bin Sa'ad was reluctant to

commence hostilities against the Prophet's family, Ibn Ziyad recalled him and replaced him with Shimr Zil Jowhan. Shimr, a man without moral compunctions, surrounded the Hussaini camp and cut off the supply of water. The final confrontation came on the 10th of Muharram. (Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and the date is mentioned here because the 10th of Muharram has come to occupy a special place in Muslim history). Hussain, the soldier of God, who had drunk from the lips of the Prophet and who would not submit to the tyranny of Yazid, arranged his seventy two men in battle formation, advanced and met the forces of darkness. Each of the men was cut down and at last, the grandson of the Prophet also fell. His head was cut off and sent to Kufa where Ibn Ziyad mistreated it in the most abominable manner and paraded it through the streets. The ladies and surviving children in Hussain's entourage were safely escorted back to Madina by some well-wishers. It was the year 680.

More Muslim tears have been shed for the blood of Hussain ibn Ali than any other martyr in Islamic history. Hussain's martyrdom provided Islam with a paradigm for selfless struggle and sacrifice. For hundreds of years, generations would rise, invoking the name of Hussain ibn Ali, to uphold justice and to fight against tyranny. For some Muslims, it was the defining moment in Islamic history.

Hussain stood for faith and principle in the face of tyranny and coercion. In the person of Hussain, faith held its head high against the sharpness of the tyrant's blade. Hussain was the embodiment of the Qur'anic teaching that humankind is born into freedom and is to bow only before the Divine majesty. Freedom is a trust bestowed upon all men and women by the Creator; it is not to be surrendered before the oppression of a mere mortal.

Karbala imparted a new meaning to the term struggle. Humankind must strive with patience and constancy in the face of extreme adversity. Comfort and safety are not to be impediments in the higher struggle for the rewards of the hereafter. Hussain did not give up his struggle even though he was abandoned by the multitudes that had offered him support. He did not surrender while facing insurmountable odds.

History is a jealous and demanding consumer. Time and again, it demands the ultimate sacrifice from the faithful, so that faith may renew itself. Karbala was a renewal of faith. Islam received an eternal boost from

the sacrifice of Hussain ibn Ali. Faith had triumphed even while the sword had conquered.

Before Karbala, Shi' Aan e Ali was a religious movement. After Karbala, it became both a religious and political movement. As we shall see in later chapters, the echoes of Karbala were heard again and again throughout Islamic history and imparting to it a directional momentum that persists even in contemporary affairs.

So great was the shock from Hussain's martyrdom, that even Yazid sought to distance himself from the tragedy. Ibn Kathir reports that when he heard of the events of Karbala, Yazid wept bitterly and cursed the actions of Ibn Ziyad. But when we view the sum total of Yazid's actions and his personal character, these were nothing but crocodile tears of a tyrant.

6.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz, The First Revivalist Emir

Islam, meaning surrender to the Will of God, is an eternal idea.

Muslims assert that it is the pristine faith of mankind, subscribed to by the first created humans, Adam and Eve and confirmed by the Messengers of God, including among others, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammed. Islam throws a challenge to the community of believers to create a society “enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in God”. Islamic history is a perpetual struggle to meet this challenge in the matrix of human affairs. This struggle is continuous and relentless. Muslims through the centuries have struggled to rediscover the fountain from which the Prophet drank. The corruption that surfaces with time is challenged time and again and a corporal attempt is made at a renewal of faith. Hence, revivalist movements in Islam provide benchmarks from which subsequent historical events can be measured and understood.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz, also known in history as Omar II, was the first revivalist Emir in Islamic history. After Muawiya, the character of the Caliphate changed and dynastic rule was established. The corruption of the Omayyads reached its crescendo with Karbala. The Omayyads built lavish palaces, surrounded themselves with servants and maids, accumulated enormous estates, treated the public treasury as their privy purse and lived like princes and kings. There was no accountability for their wealth or for their actions. The populace had no say in the affairs of the state. The Caliph was not nominated nor could he be questioned.

The people were there merely to obey the strongman, pay taxes and serve in the armed forces.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz became the Emir by a coincidence of history. When the Omayyad Emir Sulaiman (714-717) lay on his deathbed, he was advised that he could earn the pleasure of God by following the example of the early Caliphs and nominating someone besides one of his own sons as the

next Emir. He therefore dictated in his will that Omar bin Abdul Aziz, a distant cousin, was to succeed him and Omar bin Abdul Aziz was to be followed by Yazid bin Abdul Malik. Omar bin Abdul Aziz was a man of polish and experience, having served as the governor of Egypt and Madina for more than twenty-two years. He had been educated and trained by a well-known scholar of the age, Saleh bin Kaisan. Before his accession to the Caliphate, Omar bin Abdul Aziz was a dashing young man, fond of fashion and fragrance. But when he accepted the responsibilities of Caliphate, he proved to be the most pious, able, far-sighted and responsible of all the Omayyad Emirs.

Indeed, Omar bin Abdul Aziz set out to reform the entire political, social and cultural edifice of the community and to bring back the transcendental values that had governed the Islamic state in its infancy. He started by setting a good example in his own person. When news reached him of his nomination to the Caliphate, he addressed the people, “O people! The responsibilities of the Caliphate have been thrust upon me without my desire or your consent. If you chose to select someone else as the Caliph, I will immediately step aside and will support your decision”. Such talk was a breath of fresh air to the public. They unanimously elected him.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz discarded his lavish life style and adopted an extremely ascetic life after the example of Abu Dhar Ghifari, a well-known companion of the Prophet. Abu Dhar is known in history as one of the earliest mystics and sufis in Islam who retired from public life in Madina during the period of Uthman and lived in a hermitage some distance away from the capital. Omar bin Abdul Aziz discarded all the pompous appendages of a princely life—servants, slaves, maids, horses, palaces, golden robes and landed estates—and returned them to the public treasury. His family and relatives were given the same orders. The garden of Fidak provides a good example. This was a grove of palms owned by the Prophet. The Prophet’s daughter Fatima had asked for this garden as an inheritance but the Prophet had declined saying that what a Prophet owned belonged to the whole community. Fatima had pressed her claim before Abu Bakr but Abu Bakr had denied the request saying that he could not agree to something that the Prophet had not agreed to. After the Caliphate of Ali, Fidak had been made a personal estate of the Omayyads. Omar restored Fidak to the public treasury, as a trust for the whole community.

The Omayyads had no accountability to the treasury. To support their lavish life styles, they collected enormous taxes from Persia and Egypt. They compelled traders to sell them their merchandise at discount prices. The Emir's appointees received gifts of gold and silver in return for favors. Omar reversed the process. Omar abolished such practices, punished corrupt officials and established strict accountability.

Some Omayyad officials, drunk with power, mistreated the conquered peoples. Oftentimes, their property was confiscated without due process of law. Contrary to the injunctions of the Shariah, even though people in the new territories accepted Islam, they continued to be subject to Jizya. Those who refused to pay the taxes were subject to harsh punishment. Omar abolished these practices and ensured fairness in the collection of taxes. Gone was the oppression of Hajjaj in Iraq and Qurrah bin Shareek in Egypt. The populace responded with enthusiastic support of the new Caliph. Production increased. Ibn Kathir records that thanks to the reforms undertaken by Omar, the annual revenue from Persia alone increased from 28 million dirhams to 124 million dirhams.

Following the example of the Prophet, Omar bin Abdul Aziz sent out emissaries to China and Tibet, inviting their rulers to accept Islam. It was during the time of Omar bin Abdul Aziz that Islam took roots and was accepted by a large segment of the population of Persia and Egypt. When the officials complained that because of conversions, the Jizya revenues of the state had experienced a steep decline, Omar wrote back saying that he had accepted the Caliphate to invite people to

Islam and not to become a tax collector. The infusion of non-Arabs in large number into the fold of Islam shifted the center of gravity of the empire from Madina and Damascus to Persia and Egypt. As we shall elaborate in later chapters, this development had far reaching consequences during the Abbasid revolution (750) and the evolution of the schools of Fiqh (760-860).

Omar bin Abdul Aziz was a scholar of the first rank and surrounded himself with great scholars like Muhammed bin Kaab and Maimun bin Mehran. He offered stipends to teachers and encouraged education. Through his personal example, he inculcated piety, steadfastness, business ethics and moral rectitude in the general population. His reforms included strict abolition of drinking, forbidding public nudity, elimination of mixed

bathrooms for men and women and fair dispensation of Zakat. He undertook extensive public works in Persia, Khorasan and North Africa, including the construction of canals, roads, rest houses for travelers and medical dispensaries.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz was also the first Emir to attempt a serious reconciliation of political and religious differences among Muslims. Since the time of Muawiya, it had become customary for khatibs to insult the name of Ali ibn Abu Talib in Friday sermons. Omar bin Abdul Aziz abolished this obnoxious practice and decreed instead that the following passage from the Qur'an be read instead: "God commands you to practice justice, enjoins you to help and assist your kin and He forbids obscenity, evil or oppression, so that you may remember Him" (Qur'an, 16:90). It is this passage that is still recited in Friday sermons the world over. He treated Bani Hashim and the Shi'as with fairness and dignity. He even extended his hand to the Kharijites. According to Ibn Kathir, he wrote to the Kharijite leader Bostam, inviting him to an open discussion about the Caliphate of Uthman and Ali. He went so far as to stipulate that should Bostam convince him, Omar would willingly repent and change his ways. Bostam sent two of his emissaries to the Caliph. During the discussions, one of the emissaries accepted that Omar was right and gave up Kharijite extremism. The other went back unconvinced. Even so, the Caliph did not persecute the man.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz was the first Muslim ruler who moved his horizons from external conquests to internal revival. He recalled his armies from the borders of France, India and the outskirts of Constantinople. There were few internal uprisings and disturbances during his Caliphate. Islam had momentarily turned its horizons on its own soul, to reflect upon its historical condition and replenish its moral reservoir. Faith flourished, as it had during the period of Omar ibn al Khattab. It is for these reasons that historians refer to Omar bin Abdul Aziz as Omar II and classify him as the fifth of the rightly guided Caliphs, after Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali.

But greed does not surrender its turf to faith without a battle. The reforms of Omar II were too much for the disgruntled Omayyads and the rich merchants. Omar II was poisoned and he died in the year 719, after a rule that lasted only two and a half years. He was thirty-nine years old at the time of his death. And with him died the last chance for Omayyad rule.

The Conquest of Spain

The conquest of Spain was the beginning of a new era in world history. It was the first interaction of Islamic civilization with the Latin West. For centuries, Muslim Spain was a beacon of knowledge to a European continent that was shrouded in the stupor of the Dark Ages. It was Spain, along with southern Italy, that was destined to act as a conduit for learning to the West. It played a central role in the reawakening of Europe.

The very name Andalus conjures up images of a bygone golden age of a brilliant civilization. Spain, as Andalus is known today, is situated in the northwestern corner of the Mediterranean. It is a peninsula, bound to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and to the east by the Mediterranean Sea. To the north the Pyrenees Mountains separate it from France and the rest of Europe. To the south the narrow Straits of Gibraltar connect the waters of the Atlantic with the Mediterranean. Geographically, it is a part of the Mediterranean world, although topographically, the rugged mountains of the Peninsula make it more a part of North Africa than southern Europe.

The Atlantic Ocean had arrested the westward advance of Muslim armies. But the narrow straits separating Morocco from Spain were not wide enough to stop their inexorable march northward into Europe. They were propelled by the vision of a world order wherein tyranny was abolished and freedom of religion guaranteed. The early Muslims considered Tawhid (meaning, a God-centered civilization) to be a Divine trust and the establishment of Divine patterns on earth, a mission. Neither the ocean nor the desert was an insurmountable barrier in their drive to establish a just order on the globe.

Faith was the driver for centralization of power during the first centuries of Islamic rule, just as today economics is the driver for centralization of power in the world. Faith cements civilization, advances knowledge and brings prosperity. Absence of faith destroys civilization, fosters ignorance and invites poverty. When the human soul is motivated by faith, nothing in this world—not greed, nor passion nor even glory—can detract it from the

single-minded pursuit of a higher goal. People with faith work together and create civilizations. It is only when faith is weak that greed and passion win, co-operative struggle becomes impossible and civilization crumbles.

In the fifth century, the Visigoths conquered Spain and established a kingdom there with Toledo as their capital. Not noted for their skills in administration and statecraft, the Visigoth monarchs invited the Latin Church in 565 to manage the affairs of state. In return, the church obtained official sanction to propagate its faith. The economic condition of the Spanish peasant improved little under this arrangement because he was now subject to double taxation, one from the despotic monarchs and the other from the local monasteries. The rich lived in opulence while the farmers suffered abject poverty. The condition of the Jews was even worse. They were precluded from owning land and prohibited from openly practicing their religion. When they protested, the Church came down hard on them. In 707, when the Visigoth king Vietza slackened in the persecution of the Jews, the clergy promptly deposed him and installed a playboy army officer, Rodriguez, as the new king. The Jews were forced into slave labor and their women condemned to servitude.

The contrast between Spain and North Africa at the beginning of the 8th century was as marked as it can be between two geographically adjacent areas. The Muslims had arrived on the scene with a new creed and a new mission, preaching the freedom of man and justice before the law. The openness of the Muslims was not unknown in Spain and many of the serfs and the Jews had escaped and found a new home in Maghrib al Aqsa (Morocco).

North Africa was seething with vibrant energy. The Berber revolts had been overcome. The Berbers were enlisting in the Muslim armies with the newfound zeal of faith. In Damascus, Waleed I had ascended the Omayyad throne. A skillful administrator and shrewd statesman, he had successfully crushed a rebellion in far-away Khorasan and had even outmaneuvered the Chinese emperor into a stalemate in Sinkiang. Waleed is known in history as the Emir who gathered around himself the most capable generals of any Omayyad. Noteworthy among these generals were Muhammed bin Qasim (the conqueror of Pakistan), Qutaiba bin Muslim (the conqueror of Sinkiang), Musa bin Nusair and Tariq bin Ziyad (conquerors of Spain). The Omayyad governor of the Maghrib, Musa bin Nusair, waged a constant

struggle with the Visigoths for the control of Maghrib al Aqsa (The western frontier, today's Morocco). One by one, the Visigoth strongholds on the Mediterranean had been captured. Only Ceuta remained under Visigoth control and Count Julian, a Visigoth deputy, governed it.

It was customary among the Visigoth nobles to send their daughters to the royal palace so they could learn the etiquette of the court. In accordance with this custom, Count Julian sent his daughter Florinda to the court in Toledo. There, the profligate Rodriguez raped her. Julian was outraged and sought to take revenge on Rodriguez for this act of dishonor. Besides, Julian's wife was the daughter of Vietza, whose throne Rodriguez had usurped. At this time, the area around Ceuta was governed by Tariq bin Ziyad, a deputy of Musa bin Nusair. Julian traveled to Kairouan to confer with Musa and ask him to invade Spain and humble Rodriguez. The timing was right. Musa ordered Tariq to cross the straits with a contingent of Muslim troops.

According to Ibn Khaldun, there were three hundred Arab and 10,000 Berber troops in the army of Tariq bin Ziyad. The towering rock near which Tariq landed is called Jabl al Tariq, the mountain of Tariq, in English Gibraltar and the straits separating North Africa from Spain are called the Straits of Gibraltar. Tariq was an outstanding soldier, a brilliant general, a man of faith and determination. He burned the boats that had brought his forces across the straits and extolled his men to march forward in the name of Tawhid or perish in the struggle. A skirmish ensued with the local Visigoth lord, Theodore Meier, in which the latter was soundly defeated. The year was 711.

Rodriguez heard of the invasion and collecting a force of 80,000, advanced to meet the Muslim force. Tariq called for reinforcements and received an additional contingent of 7,000 cavalymen under the command of Tarif bin Malik Naqi (after whom Tarifa in Spain is named). The two armies met at the battlefield of Guadalupe. The Muslims were fighting to establish a just political order whereas the Visigoths were fighting to protect and preserve an oppressive scheme. The Arabs were superior in the art of mobile warfare. They were superb horsemen and had mastered the art of rapid enveloping movements in their advance from the desert across Asia and Africa. The Visigoths were accustomed to fighting in static, fixed positions. There was no contest. Even though the Muslims were

outnumbered, the Visigoths were cut to pieces. Rodriguez was slain in battle.

The defeated Visigoths retreated towards Toledo, the ancient capital of Spain. Tariq divided his troops into four regiments. One regiment advanced towards Cordoba and subdued it. A second regiment captured Murcia. A third advanced north towards Saragossa. Tariq himself moved swiftly towards Toledo. The city surrendered without a fight. Visigoth rule in Spain came to an end.

Meanwhile, Musa bin Nusair landed in Spain with a fresh contingent of Berber troops. His first advance was towards Seville. The defenders closed the city gates and a long siege ensued. The offensive capability of the Arabs, backed by military engineering and technology, was superior to the defensive capabilities of the Visigoths. Musa had brought his Minjaniques (machines) with him, which threw heavy projectiles at the city ramparts demolishing them. After a month, the city surrendered. The Umayyad armies now fanned out across the Spanish peninsula. In rapid succession, Madrid, Saragossa, Barcelona and Portugal fell one after another. The Pyrenees was crossed and Lyons in southern France was occupied. The year was 712.

Musa was ready to continue his drive into France and Italy. But in the meantime, Caliph Waleed I fell ill in Damascus. In the power struggle that ensued, Musa was called back to take his oath to the next Caliph Sulaiman. Musa appointed his son Abdel Aziz as the Emir of Spain, left another son Abdallah in charge of North Africa and hastened to the Umayyad Capital. During their conquest of Spain, the Muslims had captured an enormous amount of booty. Musa was eager to hurry up and bring the conquered booty to Walid I so that the dying Emir would appreciate the services rendered by Musa. Meanwhile, Sulaiman, the heir-apparent, wrote to Musa to slow down his return so that by the time the war booty arrived in Damascus, Walid I would be dead and the booty would belong to Sulaiman. However, Musa, out of courtesy to the dying Emir, did not oblige Sulaiman. He arrived before Walid died. Sulaiman was very upset at losing his chance to claim the war booty. So, when he ascended the throne, he stripped Musa of all rank, accused him of misappropriating war funds and reduced him to stark poverty. Musa lived the rest of his life as a beggar, half blind and at the mercy of public charity.

The Jews and the peasants in Spain received the Muslim armies with open arms. The serfdoms were abolished and fair wages were instituted. Taxes were reduced to a fifth of the produce. Anyone who accepted Islam was relieved of his servitude. A large number of Spaniards became Muslim to escape the oppression of their former masters. The religious minorities, the Jews and the Christians, received the protection of the state and were allowed participation at the highest levels of the government.

Spain, under Muslim rule, became a beacon of art, science and culture for Europe. Mosques, palaces, gardens, hospitals and libraries were built. Canals were repaired and new ones were dug. New crops were introduced from other parts of the Muslim empire and agricultural production increased. Andalus became the granary of the Maghrib. Manufacturing was encouraged and the silk and brocade work of the peninsula became well known in the trading centers of the world. Andalus was divided into four provinces and efficient administration was established. Cities increased in size and prosperity. Cordoba, the capital, became the premier city of Europe and by the 10th century had over one million inhabitants.

The Conquest of Sindh

The conquest of Sindh, located in today's Pakistan, happened in stages. During the Caliphate of Omar ibn al Khattab, Muslim armies approached the coast of Makran, but Omar withdrew the troops in response to reports of a harsh and inhospitable terrain. Emir Muawiya subdued eastern Afghanistan and the Northwest Frontier areas. However, it was not until the reign of Walid I (705-713) that much of what is today Pakistan was brought under Muslim rule.

From pre-Islamic times, there was a brisk trade between the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and the western coast of India and Sri Lanka. Ships rode the eastern monsoons to the coast of Malabar and Sri Lanka to pick up spices and returned home riding on the western monsoons. Spices were in great demand throughout West Asia, North Africa and southern Europe and transactions were extremely profitable. This trade continued to thrive and expand with the advent of Muslim rule in West Asia and North Africa. It was through these merchants that Islam was first introduced into Kerala in southwestern India and Sri Lanka, located near the tip of India.

Sindh was notorious for its pirates in those times. These pirates would wait in ambush for merchant ships on the coast of Sindh and would raid them for booty. In the fateful year 707, these pirates attacked one of the Muslim merchant ships sailing back from Sri Lanka to the Persian Gulf. The men, women and children on board the ship were captured and taken inland to Sindh, where the Raja imprisoned them.

Hajjaj bin Yusuf Saqafi was the Omayyad governor of Iraq. When reports reached him of this incident, he wrote to Raja Dahir demanding that the captives be released and the responsible pirates punished. Dahir refused. This refusal set the stage for the onset of hostilities. It was the responsibility of the Caliphate to protect its citizens and to fight against injustice no matter what quarter it came from. Hajjaj bin Yusuf had that responsibility as a governor representing the Caliph. He sent an expedition under Ubaidullah

bin Binhan to free the captives but Ubaidullah was defeated and killed in combat by troops of the Raja.

Determined that the provocations meet an appropriate response, Hajjaj dispatched an army of 7,000 seasoned cavalymen under Muhammed bin Qasim Saqafi. Muhammed bin Qasim was only a young man of seventeen but was one of the most capable generals of the era. Paying attention to detailed planning, he sent heavy assault engines and army supplies by sea while the cavalry advanced by land through Baluchistan.

The success of an assault requires that the offensive weapons be superior to the defensive weapons. By the year 700, the Muslims had improved upon the various engines of war they had encountered in their advance through Persia, Byzantium and Central Asia. One specific assault engine was the minjanique, a catapult that could throw large stones at an enemy. The catapult, as a weapon of war, was in use in China as early as the fourth century. Muslim engineers made two specific improvements on the Chinese design. First, they added a counterweight to one end of the cantilever, so as to harness the potential energy of the counterweight as the catapult was let go. Second, they mounted the entire mechanism on wheels so that the lateral reaction of the throw did not reduce the range of the machine. The minjaniques could project rounded stones weighing more than two hundred pounds over distances greater than three hundred yards. Persistent pounding by such large stones could bring down the sturdiest walls in the forts in existence at that time.

After capturing Panjgore and Armabel, Muhammed bin Qasim advanced towards the port of Debal, which was located near the modern city of Karachi. The Raja of Debal closed the city gates and a long siege ensued. Once again, the means for offensive warfare proved to be more powerful than the means for defense, enabling the Muslim armies to continue their global advance towards military and political centralization. As was the pattern with Muslim conquests, the minjaniques threw heavy projectiles at the fort and demolished its walls. After a month, Debal fell. The local governor fled and the Muslim prisoners who had been held there were freed.

From Debal, Muhammed bin Qasim continued his advance to the north and east. All of Baluchistan and Sindh fell including Sistan, Bahraj, Kutch, Arore, Kairej and Jior. Raja Dahir was killed in the Battle of Jior. One of his

sons, Jai Singh resisted Muhammed bin Qasim at the Battle of Brahnabad, but he too was defeated and had to flee. Muhammed bin Qasim founded a new city near the present city of Karachi, built a mosque there and advanced northwards to western Punjab. Multan was his target. Gour Singh was the Raja of Multan. His large army was reinforced by contingents from neighboring rajas. The Indians excelled in static warfare with armored elephants and foot soldiers but these were no match against swift, hard hitting cavalry. Realizing the advantage enjoyed by Muhammed bin Qasim's cavalry in mobile warfare, the Raja locked himself in the fort of Multan. A siege ensued. Once again the technology of minjaniques proved decisive. The heavy machines destroyed the fort and the raja surrendered. Multan was added to the Muslim empire in the year 713.

The conquest of Sindh brought Islamic civilization face to face with the ancient Vedic civilization of the Indo-Gangetic Plains. In later centuries, there was much that Muslim scholarship would learn from India—mathematics, astronomy, iron smelting—to name but a few subjects. (Muslim scholarship has focused more on the interaction between Islam and the West and has neglected the interaction between Islamic civilization and the East. This is a surprise considering that until the 18th century, there was little that the West had to offer the more advanced Islamic civilization. The flow of knowledge was almost always from Islam to the West. By contrast, the Muslims learned a great deal from India).

Soon, the borders of the Omayyad Empire extended to the borders of China and the Muslims acquired a great many advanced technologies from the Chinese, including the processing and manufacture of silk, porcelain, paper and gunpowder. The Prophet himself said: “Seek knowledge even onto China”. The addition of what is today Pakistan consolidated an empire extending from the Pyrenees to the Indus and the Gobi desert. This vast empire was now rubbing elbows with the ancient civilizations of India and China. From this vantage point, the Muslims were in a superb position to absorb, transform and develop knowledge from Persia, Greece, India and China.

Muhammed bin Qasim was eager to continue his advance into northern and eastern Punjab but events in far away Damascus overtook events in Pakistan. Caliph Walid I died in 713. In the ensuing political turbulence,

Muhammed bin Qasim was summoned back to Iraq, just as Musa bin Nusair was summoned from Spain at about the same time.

After the death of Caliph Walid I, the end of Muhammed bin Qasim was even more tragic than that of Musa bin Nusair. Muhammed bin Qasim was a nephew of Hajjaj bin Yusuf, also known as Hajjaj the Cruel, the governor of Iraq. The new Caliph Sulaiman had a personal dislike of Hajjaj but Hajjaj died before Sulaiman could punish him. So, Sulaiman turned instead against Hajjaj's relatives. Muhammed bin Qasim was dismissed and sent back to Iraq. The new governor of Iraq, Saleh bin Abdur Rahman hated Hajjaj because the latter had killed Saleh's brother. But since Hajjaj had died, Saleh also turned against Hajjaj's relatives. Muhammed bin Qasim was arrested and sent to prison for no fault but that he was a nephew of Hajjaj. In prison, Muhammed bin Qasim was blinded, tortured and killed. Thus ended the life of two of the most brilliant generals of the 8th century.

The fate of Musa bin Nusair and Muhammed bin Qasim is a lesson of historical importance. With the ascension of Muawiya, legitimacy of rule was no longer by consent of the masses; it was by force. Sultan after sultan arose and established himself by dictate or by virtue of inheritance from soldier-conquerors. When a ruler was competent and just, as happened with Omar bin Abdul Aziz, the common people enjoyed some freedoms. When he was a tyrant, as happened with Sulaiman bin Abdul Malik, the people suffered. Since the period of the first four Caliphs, Muslims have not shown an institutional capability to evolve and nourish their political leadership from among the masses. When the body politic throws up its first echelon of leadership, the tendency has been to destroy that leadership, unless the leader survives through shrewd maneuvering or ruthless imposition. This inability to cultivate and nourish political leadership from the bottom up has defined the limits of Muslim power and in a broader sense, the achievements of Islamic civilization. The survival of potential leaders has always depended on the whims of the despot at the top or of his local political cronies.

A second lesson from the tragic deaths of these two outstanding generals is that the internal dialectic of the world of Islam has defined the limits of its reach. Having completed the conquest of Spain, Musa bin Zubair was ready to launch an invasion of France when he was called back. He might well have succeeded in this goal because there was as yet no strong leader

in Gaul to resist a determined assault. By the time the Muslims did come around to venture into central France, Gaul had a strong leader in Charles Martel and the Muslims were forced to turn around at the Battle of Tours (737). Similarly, Muhammed bin Qasim had successfully penetrated the Indian defenses in the Indus River basin. Given a green signal from Baghdad and Kufa, he might well have extended the dominions of the Caliphate into the Gangetic plains. This was not to be. Mohammed bin Qasim was called back from Multan just as he prepared to launch a major thrust beyond the Indus River. Northern India remained in Rajput hands for the time being. It was not until the victory of Mohammed Ghori at the Battle of Panipat (1191) that the Muslims captured Delhi. In both cases, it was the internal turmoil in the Muslim body politic that was the determining factor in the arrest of the Muslim advance.

9.

The Battle of Tours

It was a decisive battle that marked the utmost reach of one civilization and the beginning of the advance of another. In the year 732, Muslim armies reached the farthest extent of their penetration into northern Europe and after the Battle of Tours, pulled back to the south. The Latin West stopped the Muslims and embarked on a counter offensive of its own.

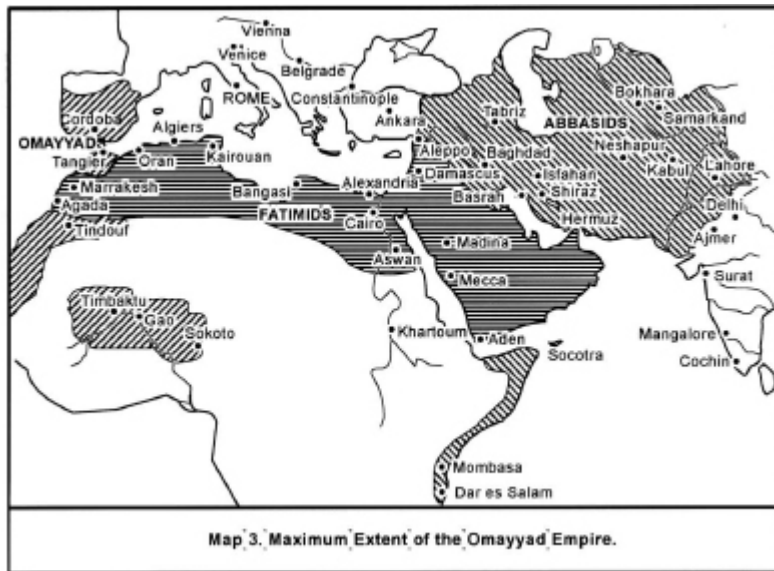
The Battle of Tours must be understood in its historical context. In the fifth century, France, like most of Western Europe, was overrun by barbaric Gothic (Germanic) tribes. The term barbaric means these tribes did not have a higher culture. But they did have a strong commitment to their tribes and their race (The term that Ibn Khaldun uses is *Asabiyah*). This commitment fostered cohesion and enabled them to overrun the Roman Empire. (Race, as a strong element in European political movements shows up even in our own times, for instance in the policies of Nazi Germany). The Visigoths (western Germans) overran Spain and southern France. The Ostrogoths (eastern Germans) captured Italy and the western reaches of the Adriatic Sea (today's Croatia and Slovenia). The Franks, another Germanic tribe, consolidated their hold on Gaul (central and northern France).

It was into this medley of barbaric kingdoms that the Church of Rome injected itself as a civilizing force. By the sixth century, the Goths had settled down in the conquered areas as landlords, taxing and exploiting the local population. The church established a series of monasteries throughout Western Europe and entered into a working relationship with the landlords and the strongmen. An agreement was reached between the ruling Visigoths of Spain and the Latin Church in the year 565, whereby the Church offered administrative support to the throne in return for freedom to preach the new faith. But the only administrative structure that the Church had to offer at that time was fiefdom and it was imposed on Spain as well. The local political structure of the church revolved around the abbeys and the monasteries, which imposed their own taxes in return for dispensing ritual rites. In time, the abbeys and monasteries became rich and their power grew in proportion to their wealth. In many areas, the strongest forts were those

around monasteries and abbeys, because it was only the Church that could afford the cost of such construction. Political and military power was shared between the Church, the landlords and the military strongmen, each of whom levied their own taxes on the peasants, impoverishing them.

Just as the history of northern Europe hinges on the Germanic peoples, the history of the Maghrib hinges on the Berbers. The Berbers, a sturdy, resilient and handsome race of people inhabiting the Atlas Mountains, had been subdued by Uqba bin Nafi in his advance towards the Atlantic Ocean. But periodic uprisings continued for more than a century and repeated expeditions were required to contain the uprisings. It was not until the 9th century that the Berbers finally settled down and themselves became the bearers of the Islamic banner. There is a direct correlation between the advance of Muslim armies into Europe and the restlessness of the Berber peoples. When the Berbers were quiet, Muslim armies advanced. Whenever there was an uprising in the Maghrib, the advance either stopped or regressed. Once again, this fact reinforces our thesis that the primary driver in Islamic history has been its internal dialectic.

The invasion of France has to be understood against this background. Southern France was a part of the Visigoth territories and forays into France were an extension of the campaign against the Visigoths. The first incursion was made during the reign of Caliph al Walid and was successful in subduing Sorbonne and Lyons (713). A second raid made in 714 captured Normandy. After consolidating their hold on the former Visigoth territories, Muslim armies began an invasion of Gaul (central France). An expedition in 731 under Anbasa bin



Saheem extended Muslim dominions beyond Carcassonne; but Anbasa was killed during this campaign. After Anbasa, Abdur Rahman bin Abdullah was appointed the governor of Spain. He crossed the Pyrenees in the spring of 732 after careful preparations. The first Frankish resistance came from the Duke of Achetain near the port of Borden. The Duke was defeated and Borden was captured. After subduing all of southern France, Emir Abdur Rahman turned north and on the plains of Tours, near the modern city of Paris, he met the Frankish chief Charles Martel. Martel was the illegitimate son of Pepin II, another German chief who controlled northeastern France. In the fateful Battle of Tours, Martel had the support of neighboring Frankish and German chiefs. The Frankish infantry, armed with hammers and long scepters, stood its ground against the Muslim cavalry. Emir Abdur Rahman himself led the charge, but fell in combat on the second day of the battle. With their Emir fallen, the Muslim armies withdrew under the cover of night having lost more than 100,000 men in the battle.

This was the last major incursion of Muslims into northern Europe, but their inability to mount another offensive had more to do with the uprising of the Berbers in North Africa and the Abbasid Revolution (750) in far away Central Asia, than with the prowess of Frankish Chiefs. Muslim

military power was at the limit of its reach. Their supply lines were over-extended and their troops were restive after a long campaign.

However, the retreat at Tours did not stop the Muslim advance elsewhere in Europe. Muslim presence continued in southern France for over a century. In 734, the Muslims captured Arles, St. Remy, Avignon and reoccupied Lyons and Burgundy. Successful raids were conducted on the western (Atlantic) coast of France throughout the 8th and 9th centuries. In the year 889, Muslims established a presence in western Switzerland, which lasted almost two centuries. During the reign of Abdur Rahman III of Spain, Fraxinetum, Valais, Geneva, Toulon and Great St. Bernard were captured and reinforced (939-942). The victorious armies then swung around Lake Geneva in 956 and established themselves in the mountain passes leading into Italy.

Thereafter, Muslim military power began to decline. The primary reason for this decline was the civil wars in Spain, which ultimately led to the disintegration of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain in the year 1032 and the establishment of petty principalities often fighting each other with the help of Christian princes. The Berbers in the Maghrib were always restless. The hold of the Abbasid Caliphate over North Africa waned with the rise of the Aghlabids (808) and gradually disappeared under the hammer of tribal uprisings. The Fatimids rose from the dust of the Aghlabids, consolidated their hold on North Africa and cemented it with the conquest of Egypt (969). Ideological and military battles raged among the Fatimids based in Cairo, the Abbasids based in Baghdad and the Umayyads based in Cordoba. Taking advantage of this mayhem, Christian armies ejected the Muslims from southern France, Italy and the Mediterranean islands during the early Crusades (1050).

The Battle of Tours was a defining moment in global history. The inability of Abdur Rahman to defeat Charles Martel ensured that Western Europe would remain Christian. Internal squabbles were soon to consume the Muslims and they were never able to mount a serious offensive at Western Europe again.

The Abbasid Revolution

The Abbasid revolution was the first major military-political upheaval in the Muslim world, which resulted in the destruction of one dynasty and its replacement by another. The lessons from that revolution are as valid today as they were in the year 750.

Civilizations decay from within. External factors are mere occasions that provide the coup de grace for a civilization. Muslim history is no exception. The primary causes for the marginalization of Muslims in world history are internal. If one were alive in the year 740, one would see a Muslim empire extending from Paris to Lahore. Yet, within this enormous edifice, mighty forces were gathering momentum that would shake the empire to its very foundation. The question before a student of history is: what destroyed the internal cohesion of the Muslims?

In the historical context, faith embraces all human activity, including religious beliefs, economics, sociology, politics, statecraft, administration, science, art and culture. It is this all-embracing aspect of Islamic faith that is called Tawhid and a civilization that is based upon it is a Tawhidic civilization. Most Muslims today have reduced Tawhid to a single dimension—namely, belief in God—and have largely neglected its all-embracing dimensions.

The Omayyads fell from grace because they had departed from the Tawhidic civilization as it was founded by the Prophet and practiced by the first four Caliphs. The Omayyads were able soldiers, some were consummate politicians (Muawiya, Waleed I), one was pious and noble (Omar bin Abdul Aziz) but most were ruthless, impious and cruel. We will catalogue the most obvious of the deficiencies in their rule.

1. The Omayyads were unsuccessful in establishing the legitimacy of their rule. The issue of succession and legitimacy of rule arose immediately after the death of the Prophet. We have covered in Chapter 1 how Abu Bakr was elected the Caliph after the Prophet, and also the turbulent circumstances surrounding the election of Ali ibn Abu Talib to the Caliphate

after the assassination of Uthman. By the year 740, there emerged multiple positions on the issue of succession after the Prophet. It is necessary to understand the more important of these because such understanding puts the rise of the Abbasids in perspective. More importantly, it helps us understand the historical context for some of the divisions that have rocked the Muslim world through the centuries and continue to rock it today. The issues are complex and what we present is but a brief summary.

2. The election of Abu Bakr to the Caliphate was not unanimous. Ibn Khaldun records a conversation between Ibn Abbas and Abu Bakr, which clearly shows that the former believed Ali ibn Abu Talib to be the rightful heir to the Prophet. The differences appear in greater clarity after the assassination of Omar ibn al Khattab and at the meeting of the Shura committee constituted by Omar to elect a successor. The majority view accepted not only the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but also the ijma (consensus) of the Companions. This was the opinion adopted by supporters of Uthman. The supporters of Ali held that the chain of authority flowed from the Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet and by delegation from the Prophet to Ali ibn Abu Talib. Those who accepted the latter position were called Shi'i-at-Ali or Shi' Aan e Ali (partisans or party of Ali).

From an internal Arab perspective, the differences arose from the conflicting claims of Bani Hashim and Banu Umayyah to the leadership of the community. Ali, a cousin of the Prophet, belonged to Bani Hashim. Muawiya as well as his progeny belonged to Banu Umayyah. After the Battle of Siffin and the tragedy of Karbala, there was no love lost between these two tribes. The Umayyads kept a close watch on the leadership of Bani Hashim and at times treated them with harshness, indeed cruelty.

The majority opinion which accepted the chain of political authority from the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the ijma (consensus) of the Companions, later crystallized into the orthodox Sunni position. Politically, this implies acceptance of the Caliphates of Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali as a legitimate expression of the collective will of the Companions. This view was championed through the centuries by the Turks, the Moghuls and by successive dynasties in North and West Africa, Spain, Malaysia and Indonesia. The position is accepted today by approximately ninety percent of Muslims in the world. The minority opinion, which accepted the chain of authority from the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and by delegation

from the Prophet to Ali ibn Abu Talib and his successor Imams was championed by the Safavids of Persia (1500-1720) and is designated the Shi'a position. About ten percent of the Muslims today subscribe to this position.

By the year 750, the Shi'a position had undergone further divisions. After the martyrdom of Hussain at Karbala, the mantle of leadership fell to his son Zainul Abedin, also known as Ali ibn Hussain. Repression from the Omayyads was heavy. Therefore, Zainul Abedin turned his attention to spiritual matters and to building the community from within. The absence of political activism was unacceptable to some of his followers who looked for a more activist leader. Zainul Abedin's son Zaid took up the challenge. Encouraged by a promise of help from the people of Kufa, he took on the Omayyads in battle. True to their historical perfidy, the Kufans abandoned Zaid and he fell in battle. His martyrdom created the Zaidi branch among Shi'a Muslims. The Zaidis believe in the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, Omar and Ali and in the Imamate of Hassan, Hussain, Zainul Abedin and Zaid. They reject the Caliphate of Uthman. In history, their primary contribution was the spread of Islam from Oman to East Africa and their resistance to Portuguese incursions in the 16th century.

A second schism took place amongst Shi'a after the fifth Imam, Ja'afar as Saadiq. His eldest son Ismail predeceased him. Therefore, Imam Ja'afar appointed his second son Musa Kazim as the Imam. But a section among the Shi'as refused to accept the Imamate of Musa Kazim and insisted on the Imamate of Ismail. This group is called the Ismailis. They are also referred to as Fatimids because of their lineage from Fatima, beloved daughter of the Prophet. The Fatimids played a pivotal part in Islamic history in the 9th and 10th centuries when they occupied Egypt, North Africa, Hejaz and Palestine. It was the Fatimids who made a serious attempt to conquer Italy in the 10th century and it was they who bore the first brunt of Crusader attacks on Jerusalem in the 11th century. It was their military challenge that strengthened the Omayyad rule in Spain in the 10th century and brought the Seljuk Turks to the defense of the orthodox Caliphate in Baghdad (10th, 11th and 12th centuries). They were finally displaced by Salahuddin Ayyubi towards the end of the 12th century.

For clarity, we summarize here the spectrum of beliefs among Muslims. The Sunnis believe in the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and accept the

ijma of the Companions. This means acceptance of the first four Caliphs namely, Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali as the rightly guided Caliphs (Khulfa-e-Rashidoon). The Ithna-Asharis believe in the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and accept the Imamate of twelve Imams, namely, Ali, Hassan, Hussain, Zainul Abedin, Muhammed Baqir, Ja'afar as Saadiq, Musa Kazim, Ali Rada, Jawwad Razi, Ali Naqi Hadi, Hasan Askari and Muhammed Mahdi. The Sabayees believe in the first seven Imams. The Fatimids believe in the Imamate of the first six Imams and of Ismail. The Ithna-Ashari, the Fatimids and the Sabayees are collectively referred to as Shi'a. Some historians also refer to them as Alavis. The Zaidis are intermediate in their beliefs between the Sunnis and the Shi'as. They believe in the Imamate of the first four Imams and of Zaid bin Ali and also in the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and Omar but not of Uthman. We must emphasize that all Muslims believe in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet and disagree only in the historical unfolding of Islam in the matrix of human affairs. Like the branches of a mighty tree, the various schools of Fiqh shade the Muslim Ummah and Islamic history would not be the same without any of them.

During the time of Imam Ja'afar, yet another schism took place, which had a profound and lasting impact on Islamic history. Not satisfied with the political quietude of Imam Ja'afar, some supporters of Bani Hashim looked elsewhere for leadership. They found a leader in Muhammed bin Hanafia, a son of Ali ibn Abu Talib from one of his marriages after the death of Fatima. This is the beginning of the non-Fatimid branch of the Alavis. After Muhammed bin Hanafia, his son Abu Sulaiman Abdullah became the Imam but he was poisoned by the Omayyad Caliph Sulaiman. As he lay dying, Abdullah looked around for someone from his family to pass on the Imamate. As no one from his immediate family was available, he found a Hashimite, Muhammed bin Ali Abbas, in a nearby town. Muhammed bin Ali Abbas was a grandson of Abbas, uncle of the Prophet. Thus, through a twist of historical circumstance, one branch of the Imamate passed from children of Ali ibn Abu Talib to the children of Abbas. This branch is referred to as the Abbasids. It was the Abbasids who established their Caliphate in the year 750 and ruled from Baghdad the vast Islamic Empire for more than five hundred years until the Mongols destroyed Baghdad in 1258.

Muhammed bin Ali Abbas was a tireless worker for the Abbasid cause and established a network of supporters throughout Iraq, Persia, Khorasan and in areas that today lie in the Central Asian republics of Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Tadzig and Uzbek peoples. After Muhammed, his son Ibrahim became the Imam. As the Abbasid movement, centered on the claim that the Caliphate belonged to Bani Hashim of which the Abbasids were a branch, gained momentum, so did the repression from the Omayyads. The Omayyad Caliph Marwan had Ibrahim arrested, put in jail and finally killed by forcing his head into a sack of boiling lime. Before his death, Ibrahim managed to communicate with his brother Abul Abbas Abdullah and appointed him the Imam. Abul

Abbas vowed to take revenge on the Omayyads for the cruel death of his brother and as we shall see later, he accomplished this with a vengeance.

The ideological basis for Abbasid rule was not provided until a generation after they gained power. It was Caliph Mansur, who provided this ideological basis in 770 in response to a question from a Kharijite. According to this position, since the Prophet left no sons and lineage passes from father to son, the children of Fatima had no claim to succession. Accordingly, succession had to be through the male progeny of the Prophet's uncle Abbas.

There was yet another position on the Caliphate which was politically important at the time of the Abbasid revolution but which lost its vigor in later centuries. That was the position taken by the Kharijites who maintained that the Caliphate should be open to all Muslims, whether Arab or non-Arab and should not be the privilege only of Omayyads or Hashemites. This seemingly democratic position always remained at the fringe of the Muslim body politic because of the violent and cruel ways of the Kharijites and their extremist demands.

Thus it was that in the year 740, as the storms gathered on the horizon for a revolution, the body politic of the Muslims was rent asunder by conflicting claims to the Caliphate and Imamate. The Banu Omayya were in power but that power was increasingly challenged by Bani Hashim through the Abbasids. The Abbasids had inherited their legitimacy from the Alavis (or Shi' Aan e Ali) through an accident of history. But the Alavis were themselves divided between Zaidis, Fatimids (sixers), Sabayees (seveners) and the Ithna-Asharis (Twelvers).

The Omayyads had thrust themselves into the political process during the Caliphate of Ali ibn Abu Talib and had consolidated their rule after his assassination. Even though they radically changed the Caliphate from electoral consensus to dynastic rule, the Omayyads championed the orthodox Sunni position out of political necessity. But they could not suppress the claims of Bani Hashim or of Shi'Aan e Ali. Except for Omar bin Abdul Aziz, no Omayyad made a serious attempt to reconcile the differences among the Muslims. Confrontations continued, leading to continuous warfare against the Kharijites and sporadic but violent clashes with Shi'Aan e Ali as manifested in the great tragedy of Karbala. The Omayyads were always vulnerable to charges that they had usurped power from the house of the Prophet. This was their weak political flank and this is precisely the ideological direction from which the Abbasid movement attacked them.

3. During the 92 years of Omayyad rule, there was a paradigm shift from Tawhid to the dinar. The rulers forgot that Islamic rule was a divine trust and its primary function was to transmit the message of Tawhid. It was this transcendence that had carried the mujahids (from the root word j-h-d, to struggle) from Hejaz to the outskirts of Paris and the banks of the River Indus. This transcendence was lost during the Omayyad period. The Omayyads became a dynasty just like other dynasties in Asia or Europe with their focus on riches and power. The rulers became tax collectors so that they could sustain their palaces in Damascus. They lost their spiritual claim to leadership. Where faith is weak, a civilization declines. When spirituality is lost, political rule must of necessity be sustained at the point of the blade. This is what happened with the Omayyads. Their rule became increasingly repressive and had to be sustained by increasing brutality. It would be unfair to single out the Omayyads for this behavior. The Islamic body politic lost its bearing after the first four pious Caliphs and has only on occasions risen to the task of Divine trusteeship. As an illustration, most of the Muslim rulers in the Indian subcontinent during the 13th to 17th centuries discouraged conversion to ensure that their tax revenues would not decrease. As a result, after five centuries of Muslim rule, only a quarter of the population of Hindustan had accepted Islam.

4. The Omayyads forgot the fraternal message of Islam and treated the new converts with disdain. Often, the converts were forced to pay the Jizya

even after they had accepted Islam. It was against such discrimination that Imam Abu Haneefa (who lived through the Abbasid revolution) fought. In one of his dictums Abu Haneefa said: “The belief of a newly converted Turk is the same as that of an Arab from Hejaz”. But the Omayyads resented such reforms and Imam Abu Haneefa was jailed for his activism. In Khorasan and Persia, the Arabs held most of the higher positions in the armed forces and in the upper echelons of government. The result was racial division and social fragmentation. As conversion increased, the center of gravity shifted to the newly converted Persians and the Turks, who were kept away from the privileges of power. The social structure increasingly looked like an inverted pyramid with a small privileged Arab minority at the apex of power. The material for social revolution took root and it was only a matter of time before the pyramid was toppled.

5. The corruption that started from the top filtered down to the provincial governors and the petty officials. The cruelty and ruthlessness of Hajjaj bin Yusuf is proverbial. Instead of promoting officials on the basis of capability and integrity, as was the case during the Caliphate of Omar ibn al Khattab, or on the basis of examination and merit as was the case in the contemporary Tang dynasty of China, the Omayyads chose their governors and officials on the basis of loyalty to the rulers. The brutality of the governors was viewed as an asset in maintaining the conquered territories under control. Damascus, in essence, lost touch with the far-flung provinces, a fact that was exacerbated by the rudimentary communications of the day. So, when a determined challenge to Omayyad rule surfaced in far-away Khorasan, the response from the palaces of Damascus was slow, feeble and disjointed.

6. The Omayyads lost the ability to foster cohesion in society. Instead, they became partisans in the tribal squabbles of fellow Arabs. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the Arabs were hopelessly divided along tribal lines and often fought pitched battles against other tribes. One of the major tribal divisions was between the Muzruis (the northern Arabs) and the Yemenis (the southern Arabs). The Prophet had healed this crack and united the tribes into a common brotherhood. But during the Omayyad period, this schism resurfaced with renewed intensity. The Omayyads were supported by the Muzruis. Thanks to Omayyad blunders, the Yemenis became their enemies. The architects of the nascent Abbasid revolution exploited this division.

7. Lastly, it is the view of Ibn Khaldun that the Omayyads had become city dwellers and had lost the resilience of desert Arabs. The corruption of city life destroys the primal asabiyah (cohesion based on tribal loyalty), which Ibn Khaldun requires as the building block of civilizations. Surrounded by the opulence of Damascus, the later Omayyad rulers could hardly understand the drive, energy, enthusiasm and pristine faith of their desert forefathers. In other words, it was time for the Omayyads to leave the stage of history.

The Abbasids succeeded in every department that the Omayyads failed in. They were led by an outstanding leader, championed a popular cause, fielded brilliant generals and displayed a Machiavellian instinct for exploiting the weakness of their opponents.

The key figure in this revolution was Abu Muslim Khorasani. Abu Muslim was a man almost made for the hour. He was a Persian, born in Isfahan and therefore had impeccable credentials of birth with the exploited Persian majority. He grew up in Kufa and early in life acquired a dislike of Arab haughtiness and their superiority complex. Abbasid propaganda was active in small cells in Iraq and Abu Muslim received his early indoctrination from the Abbasid Dayee (one who invites people towards a doctrine), Eesa bin Musa Siraj. His intelligence and capability caught the attention of Eesa and he was introduced to Imam Muhammed bin Ali. The Imam saw the potential in this young man and in due time, appointed him Chief Dayee for the province of Khorasan. It was the year 744.

Khorasan was seething with discontent. The legacy of Omayyad excesses had created extreme bitterness among the local population. Unfair taxation had fostered dislike of the Arabs among the Persians. The Arabs were divided among themselves along tribal lines. Capable men and scholars were either silenced by the Omayyads or they withdrew from public life. In this atmosphere, Abbasid propaganda for the rights of the Hashemites and of Ahl-al Bait found an extremely positive reception. The Alavites supported the Abbasids as the best opportunity to overthrow the hated Omayyads and perhaps establish the rule of the house of Ali and Fatima. The common man had toiled too long under the oppressive maltreatment of Omayyad officials and prayed for deliverance.

Khorasan was governed at the time by Nasr bin Sayyar, a Mazrui (northern) Arab and a capable, loyal Omayyad supporter, but an old man of

eighty who suffered from the same parochial approach to politics as his benefactors in Damascus. He took sides in a local quarrel between the Yemeni and Mazrui Arabs and had the chiefs of one of the tribes, Ali Kirmani, murdered. This alienated Kirmani's followers and they became bitter enemies of the Omayyads. Attempts were made to patch up these inter-Arab differences, but Abu Muslim was successful in preventing a rapprochement between the two Arab tribes through shrewd political maneuvering.

With the Arabs at loggerheads with each other, Abu Muslim made his move. Word was passed through the enormously effective underground cells that the 25 th of Ramadan was to be a day of mourning in honor of the Imams who had been killed by the Omayyads. On the appointed day, the people of Khorasan hoisted black flags and an uprising began. The color black was later to become the color of the Abbasid emblem. The city of Merv was quickly overrun. Nasr appealed to Marwan for help. But, as happens at decisive moments in history, several critical events took place simultaneously and the Omayyads were hemmed in. There was a serious uprising of the Kharijites in Mecca and Madina. As he was busy suppressing this uprising, Marwan ordered the governor of Iraq to render assistance to Nasr. By the time the Iraqis arrived at the borders of Khorasan, it was too late. Abu Muslim had overrun the entire province of Khorasan and his resources in men and material had enormously increased. The Iraqis had no chance. They were routed.

It was about this time that Imam Ibrahim was cruelly murdered by Marwan, by having his head stuffed in a leather sack filled with boiling lime. This murder as well as its cruelty added fuel to the fire. Abul Abbas Abdallah became the new Imam and vowed revenge for the murder of his brother Ibrahim. Events moved rapidly. Abu Muslim had at his service some of the ablest generals of this era, among them Kahtaba bin Shabib, an Arab from Madina and Khalid bin Barmek, a Persian. Kahtaba pursued Nasr southwards towards Isfahan. Nasr died while fleeing. Hassan, a son of Kahtaba, laid siege to Nahawand, while Kahtaba himself defeated a relief force headed by Marwan's son Abdallah on the plains of Karbala (749). Kufa, the capital of Iraq, fell without further resistance.

The people of Kufa were summoned to the Jamia Masjid of Kufa. Abu Muslim, who had deftly forged unity between the disaffected Persians,

Yemeni Arabs, the Abbasids and the Alavis and had carefully kept at bay competing claims to the Imamate and Caliphate, gave an impassioned speech in which he proclaimed that the usurper Omayyads had been overthrown by the might of the people. Whatever claims the Omayyads had to the leadership of the community had been forsaken by their impiety and oppression. It was now time to elect a new Imam and Caliph and there was no one better than Abul Abbas Abdallah who met all the criteria of the Imamate and the Caliphate. Abu Muslim thus nominated Abul Abbas as the first Abbasid Caliph in Kufa on the 13 th of Rajab, 132 AH or the 25 th of November, 749 and the Abbasid era began.

Marwan was finally alarmed at these developments and advanced towards Iraq with an army of 120,000. Marwan was an able soldier, but he was also impulsive and headstrong. Opposing him was an Abbasid army of 100,000 led by Abdullah bin Ali and the able general Abu Ayun. The two armies met on the banks of the River Zab in Iraq near the village of Kushaf on the 25th of January 750. The impulsive Marwan built a bridge across the river and advanced to meet the enemy, a tactical error that allowed him no chance to retreat. The Abbasids, impelled by a sense of grievance and revenge, charged. Fate intervened. While Marwan was dismounted, his horse ran away without him. When they saw the horse without its rider, Marwan's troops assumed that he had been killed. It was a complete rout. Marwan fled towards Mosul but that city would not open its gates to him. He continued his flight westward towards Damascus, trying to raise another army. But the Abbasids were in hot pursuit. Abdullah bin Ali followed him from city to city. Damascus was stormed and captured in April 750. Marwan crossed into Egypt and reached Fustat (modern Cairo). Abdullah bin Ali sent his brother Saleh and General Abu Ayun after him. Marwan thought of invoking the help of the Christian Byzantines but was dissuaded from this effort by his lieutenants who would have nothing of external interference in this civil war. At last he was cornered in an abandoned monastery on the west bank of the River Nile. Undaunted, he charged, sword in hand, ready to offer combat and was slain by a lance hurled by an Abbasid soldier. Thus perished the last scion of the mighty Omayyads. Marwan was an able soldier. Had destiny been more kind to him, he might have excelled as a ruler. But he came upon the stage of history at time when he had zero chance to show his metal.

The Abbasids lived up to their vow to take revenge on the Omayyads. A reign of terror was let loose. The Omayyad men were hunted like rabbits and slaughtered. Only old men, women and children were spared. The bones of the Omayyad rulers (except those of Omar bin Abdul Aziz) were dug up and burned. In Damascus, Abdullah bin Ali, coaxed eighty of the Omayyad princes to dinner on the pretext of amnesty. As the princes sat down, they were tied with ropes, wrapped in carpets and clubbed to death.

But just as old trees die and in their wake new ones crop up from their seeds, old dynasties die and in their place new ones emerge. As the Omayyad princes were hunted from place to place, three of them reached the River Euphrates. Upon hearing the news of an amnesty, two of them turned back and were captured and killed. But one valiant prince, Abdur Rahman I, threw himself into the river. Undaunted by the swift current, he swam across and after years of travel incognito, arrived in Spain. There, he was received with favor by the remnants of the Omayyads and founded the Omayyad dynasty in Andalus. It was this dynasty that was to grow in later centuries to be the beacon of culture and learning in Europe. And under Abdur Rahman's lineage Andalus was to become a crown jewel of Islamic civilization.

THE INTELLECTUAL LANDSCAPE

Summary

Islam enjoins the believers to create Divine patterns upon earth. The Muslims undertook this responsibility with enthusiasm and zeal. As the pace of conversion picked up, people from Persia, India, Central Asia, Egypt, Africa and Spain entered the fold of the universal community of faith. The influx of non-Arabs brought Islam face to face with the ancient civilizations of Greece, Egypt, India and China. Muslims were faced with the task of defining the interfaces of their faith with these civilizations. They applied themselves energetically to this task, developing systems of jurisprudence and systematizing the sciences of hadith. In the process, they experimented with Greek rationalism and Buddhist spirituality. Out of this caldron of ideas emerged the Mu tazilites who attempted a rational reconciliation of faith and logic. They fumbled and the task was picked up by the Asharites and later the sufis. The intellectual effort nourished science and culture and gave birth to the classical Islamic civilization, which carried the torch of learning while Europe lay in the stupor of the Middle Ages. Great centers of learning like Cordoba, Cairo, Baghdad, Samarqand, Neshapur, Herat and Bukhara emerged and nurtured men of science, philosophy, logic, mathematics, art, architecture and culture. The legacy of these intellectual giants to human civilization included algebra, chemistry, astronomy, geography, sociology, botany, tasawwuf and the concept of infinity.

The Development of Fiqh

The triumphant advance of Muslim armies across the interconnecting landmass of Asia, Europe and Africa brought into the Islamic Empire large masses of people who were previously Christian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist or Hindu. Conversion to the new faith was slow. The conquering Muslims left the people of the territories alone as long as they paid the protective tax, *jizya* and did not interfere with freedom of choice in religion. Mass conversions to Islam took place in the reign of Omar bin Abdul Aziz (717-719) who abolished unfair taxation, tolerated dissent and treated Muslim and non-Muslim alike with the dignity due to fellow man. Impressed with his initiatives, people in the former territories of the Sassanids and the Byzantines embraced Islam in droves.

The new Muslims brought with them not only their ancient heritage and culture, but methods of looking at the sublime questions of life in ways fundamentally different from that of the Arabs. Historical Islam had to face the rationalism of the Greeks, the stratification of the Zoroastrians, the gnosticism of the Hindus, the abnegation of the Buddhists and the secular but highly refined ethical codes of the Taoist and Confucian Chinese. Add to it the internal convulsions in the Islamic world arising out of the conflicting claims of the Umayyads, the Hashemites, the Ahl-al Bait and the partisan and fractious approach of the many parties to legal issues, and one has a good idea of the challenge faced by the earliest Islamic jurists. Fiqh was the doctrinal response of the Islamic civilization to these challenges.

The codification of Fiqh solidified the foundation of Islamic civilization and was the cement for its stability through the turmoil of centuries. As long as the process of Fiqh was dynamic, creativity and ideas flowed from Islam to other civilizations. When this process became static and stagnant, historical Islam increasingly turned inwards and became marginalized in the global struggle of humankind.

Some definitions of the terms Shariah, Fiqh and secular law are in order at the outset. Shariah is the constant, unchanging, basic dimension of Islam.

It has its basis in the Qur'an and it derives its legitimacy from Divine sovereignty. Shariah defines not just the relationship of man to man, but also the relationship of man to God and of man to the cosmos. As such, it is all embracing and its dimensions are infinite. Secular law, on the other hand, deals only with the relationship of man to fellow human beings and does not concern itself with the relationship of man to the Divine. It is finite, changeable and subject to the vagaries of history and geography. It derives its legitimacy from the proclaimed sovereignty of kings, rulers and nations.

Fiqh is the historical dimension of the Shariah and represents the continuous and unceasing Muslim struggle to live up to divine commandments in time and space. It is the rigorous and detailed application of the Shariah to issues that confront humankind as it participates in the unfolding drama of history. As such it embraces the approach, the process, the methodology as well as the practical application of the Shariah. It defines the interface of an individual with himself, his family, his society, his community, as well as the civilizational interface between Islam and other faiths and ideologies.

We will attempt to summarize in this chapter the historical origins and practical developments of the five major schools of Fiqh that are currently followed by the vast majority of Muslims. These are: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Ja'afariya. There are other schools of Fiqh such as Zaidi and Ismaili, which are practiced by a relatively small number of Muslims today and we will refer to them only in their historical context. We will also summarize the Mu'tazilite and Asharite schools of thought that are seldom discussed nowadays but have left a profound, perhaps decisive imprint on Islamic thought, culture and civilization.

The Qur'an was revealed as the dynamic, spoken Word of God.

Many among the Companions memorized the entire Qur'an (the hafizun or hufaz). Some knew, understood and recited the Qur'an, but also trained and taught others. These were called the quraa (plural of qaree, meaning, one who recites the Qur'an). As many of the Companions migrated from Hijaz to Iraq, Persia, Syria and Egypt, the mantle of local leadership fell to the qura'a. Most Arabs were illiterate in the pre-Islamic era and anyone with the ability to recite and teach the language was held in high honor. Civilization was as yet ruled by the spoken word and the qura'a, most of

whom were Companions of the Prophet, were received in distant lands with well-deserved honor and respect. They were the ones who were often called upon to offer legal opinions (fatwa).

The need for producing a written copy of the Qur'an was felt after the Battle of Yamama, in which a large number of hufaz and quraa perished. Concerns arose that sooner or later all the hufaz who had learned the Qur'an from the Prophet would die. Upon the advice of Omar ibn al Khattab and other Companions, the Caliph Abu Bakr had the Qur'an written down. This copy is known as Mashaf-e-Siddiqi. Written Arabic does not have vowels attached to it. As Islam spread, first through the Arabian Peninsula and then beyond its borders during the Caliphate of Omar, local accents showed up in the pronunciation of the Qur'an. Arabic is a rich, powerful, dynamic and subtle language. Mispronunciation of a word can alter its meaning. To preserve the Qur'an as the Prophet recited it, the third Caliph Uthman ordered the preparation of a standard copy with the vowels included in the text. Seven copies of this text were reproduced and were sent to different parts of the extensive Islamic Empire.

A century after the Prophet, all of the Companions who had learned first hand from the Prophet, or the Tabeyeen who had learned from the Companions, had passed away. The Companions had known the Qur'an, as well as the context in which it was revealed, from the living example of the Prophet. The Companions were so close to the source of revelation, so suffused with the radiance of the Divine Word and its universal impact on history that they responded to its imperatives with unbounded zeal. Theirs was a world of action, not of words. They created history with their deeds, leaving others to follow in its trail. It was left to later generations to study, understand and argue about what they had done. As the time-line from the Prophet increased, it became necessary to collect, sort out and pass on the traditions of the Prophet. This was the beginning of the science of Hadith. Although, the collections of Hadith that are best known today (Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, etc.) came into existence a few centuries later, the tradition of collecting and passing on Hadith was continuous and active throughout the interim period. Next to the sciences of the Qur'an (Uloom ul Qur'an), the authenticated Prophetic traditions (Uloom ul Sunnah) provided the most important source for the development of the principles of Fiqh (Usul al Fiqh).

The development of Fiqh was an historical process. As long as the Prophet was alive, his example was necessary and sufficient for the guidance of the community. The Qur'an presents the doctrinal principles and ethical underpinnings of the Shariah. The Prophet clarified, substantiated and implemented the principles of the Qur'an. His death presented an historical challenge to his Companions to continue the process of realizing God's will in the matrix of human affairs. The first generation of Muslims rose to this challenge. Where revelation was explicit or where the Prophet had given clear direction, they followed that direction. Where the Qur'an and Sunnah provided general principles but no directive for explicit implementation, they used the process of consultation and reasoning to find solutions to the pressing problems of the day. With time, this methodology developed into a broad tradition that was practiced by the first four Caliphs. This tradition is referred to as the Sunnah of the Companions, or the ijma (consensus) of the Companions. Such consensus was sometimes universal. At other times, it was the consensus of only some of the Companions. Differences of opinion were not uncommon. Such differences were not only tolerated, they were respected. The subtle nuances of Arabic and the cosmic power of the Qur'anic language, made differences in emphasis inevitable. These differences had their impact on the development of different schools of Fiqh.

Although the principles of Islamic jurisprudence were not documented until later centuries, we see the first full and complete implementation of the Shariah in a pluralistic society under Omar ibn al Khattab. It was Omar who showed by his example that justice before the law was an Islamic duty. He established a full-fledged department of justice, appointed judges and gave them specific instructions, which included the following principles:

All men are equal before the law.

Justice is an Islamic duty ordained by the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet.

Human beings are responsible for their actions.

All adult Muslims are legal persons and are answerable in accordance with the Shariah.

The burden of proof falls on the plaintiff.

All parties must be allowed to produce evidence for their positions.

If evidence contradicts a judgment, then the judgment must be revoked.

When the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet are silent on a matter, then extrapolation may be used from similar cases.

The collective will of the Muslim community provides a legitimate basis for law.

These principles were incorporated in later centuries by successive Muslim dynasties in their jurisprudence canons. The Caliph was not above the law. There are many examples from the life of Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib, which illustrate how the head of state was treated the same way as any other citizen. Indeed, it was one of the judgments that Omar rendered in a case brought by a Persian non-Muslim that led to his assassination.

Further challenges emerged with time. As the Companions passed away, intellectual leadership of the community passed on to the Tabeyeen (those who had followed or learned from the Companions). This was the second generation of Muslims. With time, this generation too passed away. The infusion of non-Arab blood into the Islamic milieu in the 8th century presented additional challenges to the Islamic jurists. There emerged the Mujtahideen and the Fuqahah who successfully took on these challenges. In the process, choices had to be made and these choices modulated and transformed Islamic history.

If one had lived in the year 740, one would witness with awe the extent of the Islamic Empire. Muslim armies had crossed into France and were knocking at Switzerland. Constantinople (modern Istanbul), the seat of the Byzantine Empire, had undergone multiple assaults. Muslim merchants had met up with the Chinese in Sinkiang along the ancient Silk Road and were actively trading in the Indonesian islands and eastern China. The center of Vedic culture in Sindh (in today's Pakistan) was under Muslim rule.

The vast and diverse Islamic community included Arabs, Persians, Egyptians, Africans, Spaniards, Afghans, Turks and Indians. With the influx of new people came new ideas. Muslim society was in a state of flux and the pent up tensions brought on by new people and new ideas were soon to

erupt like a volcano in the Abbasid revolution (750). It was in this caldron of ideas that people wanted answers to the issues that faced the vast and diverse world of Islam.

It is a truism that great men and women create history. It is also true that historic events create great men and women. The tide of events in the second century of Hijra gave birth to scholars who systematized the science of Fiqh. Madina and Kufa were two of the prime centers of learning in the early years of Islam. Madina was the city of the Prophet and the people of Madina had close access to Prophetic traditions. However, Madina as the heart of the Islamic Empire was insulated from the challenge of ideas from neighboring civilizations. Kufa, on the other hand, located at the confluence of Arabia and Persia, was a melting pot and more susceptible to foreign ideas. It was from Kufa that the Umayyads ruled Iraq-e-Arab (modern Iraq), Iraq-e-Ajam (western Persia), Pars (central and southern Persia), Khorasan and western India (today's Pakistan). The Kufans had somewhat less of an access to the traditions of the Prophet, but they were at the front end of the challenge of ideas from the neighboring Greek, Persian,

Indian and Chinese civilizations. It was but natural that Madina and Kufa would become the earliest centers of schools of jurisprudence. Thus, the earliest developments in Fiqh, centered around Madina and Kufa, were exposed to somewhat different geographical and historical challenges. These two schools were referred to as the Madinite School and the Kufic School.

The first and foremost scholar of the Kufic School was Imam Abu Haneefa. The first scholar of the Madinite School was Imam Malik and after him Imam Shafi'i. There was a parallel and simultaneous development of the Ja'afariya School, named after Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq. The Fiqh of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal was of a somewhat later period and was a result of the political and intellectual turmoil in the 9th century.

Imam Abu Haneefa (d. 768) was at once a scholar of the first rank and a man of action. Very few sages have left as visible an imprint on Islamic history as has this savant. Born to Afghan parentage, he knew first hand the issues confronting the jurists in the newly conquered territories east of Iraq. He was also well aware of the intellectual challenge from the contemporary civilizations of Greece, Persia, India and China. As a youth, he settled in Kufa and studied under the great scholars of the age. As a young man, he

took positions against the oppression of the Omayyads and the haughtiness of Arab noblemen. For his refusal to tow the official line, he suffered imprisonment both from the Omayyads and the Abbasids. A famous quotation attributed to him, “The belief of a converted Turk is equal to that of a Muslim from Hijaz”, speaks volumes about the egalitarian temperament of the Imam. As a scholar in search of further knowledge, he frequented the halqa (study circle) of Imam Ja’afar as Saadiq and benefited from it.

The genius of Imam Abu Haneefa lies in his vision of Fiqh as a dynamic vehicle available to all Muslims in all ages. He saw Islam as a universal idea accessible to all people in space and time. Fiqh was not to be a static code applicable to one situation in one location, but a mechanism that would at once provide stable underpinnings to the Islamic civilization and would also serve as a cutting edge in its debate with other civilizations. He saw that the rigorous and exacting methodology of the Madinite School might suffocate the ability of jurists to cope with unforeseen challenges presented by new situations. Therefore, he expanded the base on which sound legal opinions stand. According to Imam Abu Haneefa, the sources of Fiqh are:

The Qur’an,

Sunnah of the Prophet,

Ijma (consensus) of some, not necessarily all of the Companions,

Qiyas (deduction by analogy to similar cases which had been decided on the basis of the first three principles) and,

Istihsan (creative juridical opinion based on sound principles). With the acceptance of istihsan as a legitimate methodology, Imam Abu Haneefa provided a creative process for the continual evolution of Fiqh. No Muslim jurist would be left without a tool to cope with new situations and fresh challenges from as-yet unknown future civilizations.

One other term needs clarification here, that is ijtiḥād (root word j-h-d, meaning struggle). Ijtiḥād is the disciplined and focused intellectual activity

whose end result is ijma or qiyas or istihsan. Ijtihad is a process. The Hanafi and Ja'afariya Schools provide the greatest latitude for ijihad. However, there are differences in emphasis. In the Ja'afariya School, emphasis is on the ijihad of the Imams. In the Hanafi School, emphasis is on the ijihad of the Companions of the Prophet, but the ijihad of the learned jurists is also acceptable. There are also differences between the Kufic Schools of Fiqh (such as that of Imam Abu Haneefa) and the Madinite Schools of Fiqh (such as that of Imam Malik) in the latitude allowed for ijihad. The ijma or consensus of the Madinite School is primarily through evidence (from the Qur'an) or correlation with the Sunnah of the Prophet. The requirements for ijma or consensus in the Kufic Schools are somewhat more liberal and include not only evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, but also ijihad of the Companions or of learned jurists.

Imam Abu Haneefa did not establish the school of Fiqh named after him, nor did he personally document his methodology. Writing was not common at that time and the spoken word was still the queen of discourse. Oration was the primary vehicle for instruction and teaching. Arabic language, syntax and grammar were learned by heart. Like the qaris of earlier years, great scholars taught through their lectures. Documentation was left to students and disciples of later generations. Specifically, it was not until the 11th century that the Hanafi School was fully elucidated and documented. Greatest among the Hanafi scholars were Abdullah Omar al Dabbusi (d. 1038), Ahmed Hussain al Bayhaqi (d. 1065), Ali Muhammad al Bazdawi (d. 1089) and Abu Bakr al Sarakhsi (d. 1096).

From the 10th century onwards, the Hanafi School received patronage from the Abbasids in Baghdad. The Turks loved the egalitarian disposition of Imam Abu Haneefa, as well as the creative aspects of the Hanafi Fiqh. When they embraced Islam, they became Hanafis and its arch defenders. The Seljuk Turkish dynasties in the 11th and 12th centuries as well as the Ottomans endorsed the Hanafi Fiqh. The Timurids, Turkomans as well as the Great Moghuls of India were its champions as well. For these historical reasons, the Hanafi School is the most widely accepted of the various schools of Fiqh in the Muslim world today. Most of the Muslims of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Central Asian Republics, Persia (until the 16th century), Turkey, northern Iraq, Bosnia, Albania, Skopje, Russia and Chechnya follow the Hanafi Fiqh. A large number of Egyptians, Sudanese,

Eritreans and Syrians are also Hanafis, although as we shall elaborate later, for reasons rooted in geography, the Maliki and Shafi'i Schools are also well established there.

The Madinite School was much more orthodox in its approach to Fiqh. Living in the city of the Prophet and growing up in the cradle of Islam, the Madinites attached the utmost importance to the Sunnah of the Prophet. The first and foremost scholar of the Madinite School was Imam Malik bin Anas (d. 795). He spent most of his life in Madina and like Imam Abu Haneefa in the previous generation, took issue with the ruling Abbasids on juridical matters, for which he was publicly flogged and imprisoned. Concerned that the istihsan of Imam Abu Haneefa would open the gate to unwelcome innovation, Imam Malik tightened the rules of ijma. While accepting the primacy of the Qur'an, he insisted on the consensus of all of the Companions as the basis of verified Sunnah (as compared to Imam Abu Haneefa who maintained that the consensus of some of the Companions was a sufficient basis for jurisprudence).

The Maliki School spread through Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Morocco through the Hajj. The North Africans visited Mecca and Madina and learned their Fiqh from the Madinites. They had little reason to visit Kufa and Iraq and therefore had only occasional contact with the Hanafi School. According to Ibn Khaldun, the cultural affinity between the unsettled Berbers of North Africa and the Bedouins of Arabia also contributed to the acceptance of the Maliki School in Libya and the Maghrib. From North Africa, the Maliki School spread to Spain and was the only official School sanctioned by the Umayyad dynasty in Cordoba. As Islam spread from the Maghrib into sub-Saharan Africa through trade routes, the Maliki School also spread to Mauritania, Chad, Nigeria and others countries of West Africa. Most Africans today follow the Maliki School. The brief interlude of Fatimid rule in Egypt in the 9th and 10th centuries did not materially change the contacts between the Berbers of the Maghrib and the Bedouins of Arabia and the Maliki School returned to North Africa when Salahuddin captured Egypt from the Fatimids (1170).

The first one to establish a formal school of Fiqh was Imam Muhammed ibn Idris al Shafi'i (d. 820). Through his Risalah (journal), he was the first scholar to systematically document the basis of Fiqh and critically examine its methodology. A Syrian by birth, Imam Shafi'i traveled to Madina and

Kufa and learned from the disciples of Imam Abu Haneefa and Imam Malik. He took issue on certain of the positions taken by the Hanafi and Maliki Schools and adopted an independent position on some of the methodologies. According to Imam Shafi'i, the sources of Fiqh are:

The Qur'an,

The Sunnah of the Prophet (on the issue of the Sunnah, Imam Shafi'i relaxed the rules of the Maliki School and suggested that the Sunnah was a valid source of jurisprudence even if it was supported by a single, reliable source. In other words, the Sunnah of the Prophet need not be supported by the ijma of all the Companions),

Qiyas, provided that it was rigorously supported by prior cases decided on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Imam Shafi'i did not accept istihsan as a valid source of Fiqh.

Thus Imam Shafi'i's positions were somewhat less orthodox than those of Imam Malik, but not as liberal as those of Imam Abu Haneefa. The Shafi'i School spread to Egypt, the Sudan, Eritrea, East Africa, Malaya and the Indonesian Islands. Like the Hanafi School, the Shafi'i School produced many brilliant scholars. One of them, the great Abu Hamid al Gazzali (d. 1111), not only influenced the development of Fiqh, but also changed the course of Islamic history through his brilliant dialectic.

It is appropriate at this stage to refer to the Mu'tazilite School of thought and its counterpoint, the Asharite School. As the Muslims captured Syria, Egypt and North Africa, they became custodians of not just the people of those countries, but their ideas as well. Most of those lands had been under Eastern Roman or Byzantine control where Greek thought was dominant. Historically, the term "Greek thought" is applied to the collective wisdom and classical thinking of the people of the eastern Mediterranean, which includes a broad geographical arc extending from Athens in Greece through Anatolia, Syria, Egypt and Libya. Greek civilization extolled the nobility of man and placed human reason at the apex of creation. Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Euclid and Archimedes are some of the household names from the

galaxy of thinkers produced by this civilization. The enduring achievement of

Greek thought is that it perfected the rational process and left its lasting legacy for humankind.

The Muslims were the first inheritors of Greek thought. It was through the Muslims—more specifically the Spanish Muslims—that rational thought reached the Latin West. And it was only after the 12th century that the West woke up from its slumber and adopted the Greek civilization as its own, while about the same time, Muslims turned away from rational thought towards more esoteric and intuitive thinking.

The early Muslims not only adopted the rational approach but set out with enthusiasm to explain their own beliefs in rational terms. Questions relating to the nature of man, his relationship to creation, his obligations and responsibilities, as also the nature of Divine attributes were tackled. No Muslim scholar would embark on an intellectual effort unless his approach had a basis in the Qur'an. The rationalists saw a justification for their approach in Qur'anic verses ("Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth ... There are indeed signs for a people who are wise", Qur'an, 2:164) and in the Sunnah of the Prophet. Indeed, the Qur'an invites human reason to witness the majesty of creation and reflect on its meaning and understand the transcendence that suffuses it. The philosophical sciences that evolved as a result of this effort are referred to as Kalam (discourse, usually a religious discourse). Sometimes, Kalam is vaguely translated as Theology, but Theology as a science never caught on in Islamic learning as it did in Christianity, because the Muslims strove and succeeded in preserving the transcendence of God. Christianity adopted the position that God is knowable in person and is hence accessible to human perception. The Muslims, despite the philosophical challenges of the Greeks, succeeded in maintaining the position that God is knowable by His names, attributes and through the majesty of His creation, whereas His transcendence is hidden by His light.

The first Islamic scholar who tackled questions of Islamic belief from a rational perspective was Al Juhani (d. 699). Note that the rational approach places human reason at the apex of creation and makes the world knowable. Al Juhani maintained that men and women not only have the capacity to know creation through their reason, but also have the capacity to act as free

agents. Belief is the result of knowledge and understanding. Indeed, humankind has the moral imperative to understand God's creation. Man, as a rational being, is mandated not only to understand the world, but also to act on it using his free will. Thus Al Juhani's views bestowed upon humankind reason and responsibility. Heaven and hell were consequences of human action. This school of philosophy was known as the Qadariya School (root word q-d-r, meaning power or free will. The Qadariya School of philosophy is not to be confused with the Qadariya sufi brotherhood, founded by Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani of Baghdad, in the 12th century).

The Qadariya approach, when pushed to the limit, takes God out of the picture of human affairs in as much as it makes heaven and hell mechanistic and solely predicated upon human action. This was unacceptable to the Muslim mind. Reaction from the more orthodox quarters was bound to surface and this happened with the emergence of the Qida (pre-destination) School. The founder of this School was Ibn Safwan (d. 745). According to Ibn Safwan, all power belongs to God, and man is predetermined in his actions, good and evil, as well as his destination towards heaven or hell. Like the Qadariya School, the Qida School sought its justification in the Qur'an ("Say! I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as God wills", Qur'an, 7:188) and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

The battle lines were now drawn. Like the Christian civilization in earlier times, the Islamic civilization was just beginning to come to grips with Greek rationalism. What was going to be the outcome? The answers were not clear and were hidden in the womb of the unknown future. Both Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq and Imam Abu Haneefa were well aware of the arguments of qida and qadar, but stayed clear of being drawn into its controversies.

Wasil ibn Ata (d. 749) combined, developed and articulated the Qadariya Schools into a coherent philosophy, which came to be known as the Mu'tazilah School. We may also look upon the Mu'tazilah School as the first response of Islamic civilization to the challenge of Greek thought. This School flourished for almost two hundred years and at times was the dominant school of thought among Muslims. Its influence was comparable to the Schools of Imam Abu Haneefa, Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq or Imam Malik. The Mu'tazilite School was challenged by Imam Hanbal (d. 855) and Hasan al Ashari (d. 935) and was finally vanquished by al Gazzali (d.

1111). This battle of ideas had a profound impact on Islamic history. It influences Muslim thinking even to this day.

The Mu'tazilite School placed its anchor on human reason and its capability to understand the relationship of man to man and of man to God. Necessarily, they based their arguments on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The principles of the Mu'tazilah School were: (1) The Uniqueness of God or Tawhid ("Say! He is God, the One; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him", Qur'an, 112:1-5), (2) the free will of man ("If it had been thy Lord's Will, they would all have believed, all who are on earth! Will thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!", Qur'an, 10:99), (3) The principle of human responsibility and of reward and punishment as a consequence of human action ("On no soul does God place a burden greater than it can bear", Qur'an, 2:286), (4) The moral imperative to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong ("You are the most noble of people, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in God", Qur'an, 3:110). The Mu'tazilites applied these principles to the issues of relationships of man to man, of man to the created world and of man to God. By placing man at the center of creation, they sought to make him the architect of his own fortunes and emphasized his moral imperative to fashion the world in the image of God's command.

Caliph Mamun adopted the Mu'tazilite School as the official dogma of the Empire. From Caliph Mansur to Caliph Al Mutawakkil (847-861), the Mu'tazilites enjoyed official patronage. It was during this period that a Darul Hikmah was established in Baghdad and books of Greek philosophy, Hindu astronomy and Chinese technology were translated into Arabic. Learning flourished and Baghdad became the intellectual capital of the world.

The undoing of the Mu'tazilites was their excessive zeal and their inability to comprehend the limitations of the methodology they championed. With official sanction, they punished those ulema who disagreed with them and tried to silence all opposition. They also overextended their methodology to attributes of God and of the Qur'an. In Islam, God is unique and there is none like unto Him. Therefore, the Mu'tazilites argued, the Qur'an cannot both be part of Him and apart from Him. To preserve the uniqueness of God (Tawhid), they placed the Qur'an

in the created space. In other words, they said that God created the Qur'an at a certain point in time. The issue of createdness caused a great deal of division and confusion among Muslims. Furthermore, by maintaining that reward and punishment flowed mechanistically from human action, they left their flank exposed for an intellectual attack. If humans are automatically rewarded for their good deeds and automatically punished for their evil, then where is the need for Divine Grace? This deterministic approach was repugnant to Muslims and a revolt was inevitable.

The challenge to the Mu'tazilites came from the Usuli (meaning, based on principles) ulema, the best known among whom was Imam Hanbal (d. 855). A great scholar, he learned the principles of Fiqh from all the Schools prevalent in his generation, namely, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Ja'afariya, as well as the Kalam (philosophical) Schools of the era. Mu'tazilite ideas were causing a great deal of confusion among the masses. Stability was required and innovation had to be combated. Imam Hanbal argued for strict adherence to the Qur'an and the verified Sunnah of the Prophet. Any principle, legal or philosophical, not based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah was to be considered bid'ah (innovation). Imam Hanbal took issue with the principle of ijma (unless it was sanctioned by the Sunnah) and totally rejected istihsan and qiyas as methodologies for Fiqh. His position was a direct challenge to the Mu'tazilites who enjoyed official patronage from the Caliphs. Consequently, Imam Hanbal was punished and jailed for most of his life. His sustained and determined opposition galvanized those who fought the Mu'tazilites. It was primarily through the efforts of Imam Hanbal that the Caliph Al Mutawakkil abandoned the Mu'tazilite School in 847. In turn, when the Asharites gained the upper hand, the Mu'tazilites were punished, jailed and silenced. Such is the fate that differing ideas have suffered at times in Islamic history!

The Hanbali School flourished in Arabia and western Iraq until the Wahhabi movement in the 18th and 19th centuries supplanted it. Because it was considered disruptive of accepted practices, it came into conflict with the Ottomans in the 18th century. The Ottomans accepted tasawwuf as a legitimate mode of knowing and, since they were Hanafis, were much more liberal in their interpretations. After the Wahhabis captured the Hijaz from the Ottomans in 1917, the Hanbali Fiqh became the official jurisprudence in Arabia (later known as Saudi Arabia). As practiced in Arabia, the Hanbali

Fiqh is known for its abhorrence, indeed condemnation, of anything that is *bida* (innovation, a practice not in strict accordance with the Qur'an and the verified Sunnah of the Prophet).

The four schools of Sunnah Fiqh—Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali—are mutually recognized. However, there have been occasions when frictions between them played an important part in the outcome of historical events. Specifically, just before the invasions of Genghiz Khan (1219), one reads of overt hostility between the followers of the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Ja'afariya Fiqh in Khorasan and Persia, a situation that played to the advantage of Genghiz in his war against the Shah of Khorasm.

The school of thought that had perhaps the most pervasive impact on Islamic thinking was the Asharite. Indeed, one may take the position that Asharite ideas have been a primary driver of Islamic civilization since the third century after the Hijra. The vast majority of Muslims through the centuries have followed one of five schools of fiqh (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, Ja'afariya) plus the Asharite philosophy. The difference is that the five schools of Fiqh are overtly discussed and have been the source of cooperation and friction, whereas Asharite ideas have been absorbed into Islamic culture like water in an oasis. The direction, achievements and failures of Islamic civilization have been influenced in no small measure by Asharite thinking. From Al Gazzali of Baghdad (d. 1111) to Muhammed Iqbal of Pakistan (d. 1938),

Asharite ideas have burst out on the Islamic landscape like an ebullient fountain and have influenced the direction of collective Muslim struggles.

Named after its architect, al Ashari (d. 935), it was the Asharite School that finally defeated the Mu'tazilites. Al Ashari was initially a Mu'tazilite. The Mu'tazilite School had placed reason above revelation and had come to the erroneous conclusion that the Qur'an was created in time. Such views were repugnant to Muslims. Al Ashari turned the argument around and placed revelation ahead of reason. Reason is time bound. It requires a-priori assumptions about before and after. Revelation is transcendent. By definition, it is not subject to our understanding of time and our assumptions of before and after. It is revelation, not reason, that tells us what is right and wrong, helps us differentiate between moral and immoral, enlightens us of the attributes of God and gives us certainty about heaven and hell. Reason

is a tool bestowed by God upon humans so that they may sort out the relationships in the created world and reinforce their belief.

The crux of the Asharite argument lies in its definition of the phenomenon of time. Al Ashari was well aware of the Greek view that matter may be divided into atoms. He extended this argument to time and postulated that time moves in discrete steps. At each discrete step and all times in between, the power and Grace of God intervenes to determine the outcome of events. This conceptual breakthrough enabled the Asharites to preserve the omnipotence of God. Whereas the Mu'tazilites had failed on this score precisely because they assumed (much as Newtonian Mechanics does today) that time is continuous so that a given action automatically and mechanistically leads to a reaction. If the outcome of an event is completely determined by the action that causes it, then there is no room for the intervention of God and the world becomes secular. This is precisely what happened to the Western (and now global) civilization a thousand years later. We may summarize the Asharite pyramid of knowledge as follows: Atoms and the physical world are at the lowest rung of the ladder. The physical world is subject to reason. But reason itself is subject to and superseded by revelation. By contrast, the model presented by the Mu'tazilites (as well as the Greeks and the modern secular civilization) places both the physical world and revelation subject to understanding by reason.

Two other important elements of the Asharite philosophy need to be stated. The Asharites asserted that only God is the owner of all action (Qur'an, 10:100). Man has no independent capacity to act but is merely an agent who has acquired this capacity as a gift from God. This doctrine, known as the doctrine of Kasab, was misunderstood and misinterpreted by later generation of Muslims as predestination. Indeed, some Muslims raised predestination to be the sixth pillar of Islam. One may put forward the argument that it was a contributing factor in the stagnation that was to envelop the Muslim world in later centuries.

Second, the Asharites held that there is a divine pattern in nature but no causality. The cause and effect that we perceive is only apparent and is only a reflection of the attributes that are inherent in nature. This doctrine was a central argument in Al Ghazzali's famous treatise, *Tahafjuz al Filasafa* (The Repudiation of the Philosophers, circa 1100) that provided the death-knell

for philosophy in Islam and fundamentally changed the course of Islamic history. Ibn Rushd (1198), perhaps the greatest philosopher the world has produced since Aristotle, provided a counter-argument to this doctrine in his famous treatise, *Tahaffuz al Tahaffuz* (Repudiation of Repudiation, circa 1190). The Muslims adopted Al Gazzali, whereas the West adopted Ibn Rushd and the two civilizations went in different directions. The consequences for the unfolding of global history were enormous.

The appearance and development of the Mu'tazilite and Asharite doctrines more than a thousand years ago is essential to an understanding of Islamic history and of contemporary Muslims. The Mu'tazilites stood on the shoulders of the Greeks but made the error of applying their methods to the Qur'an and forcing their views on fellow Muslims. For this error, their ideas were banished from Islam into the Latin West. The Asharites stood on the shoulders of the Mu'tazilites but repudiated their methods and called them kafirs. Later generation of Muslims misunderstood the Asharites, confused their doctrine with predestination and went to sleep!

The Ja'afariya School developed autonomously and in parallel with the Sunnah Schools of Fiqh. And like its sister schools, its roots are in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Although it follows an autonomous route for its sources, on most practical matters the positions of the Sunnah Schools and the Ja'afariya School are identical or similar. Indeed, on most issues, the differences in the positions taken by the Ja'afariya Fiqh and the Sunnah Schools are smaller than the differences among the Sunnah Schools themselves.

A student of history must reject the polemical position taken by some Muslims that there are only four schools of recognized Fiqh, namely, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali. The Ja'afariya Fiqh is as legitimate as the Sunnah Schools of Fiqh by virtue of the historical fact that it has flourished since the time of the Prophet and is accepted by a sizable section of the Islamic community. Similarly, the Zaidi School of Fiqh is also historically legitimate although we have made a conscious decision not to cover it here because it is followed by a smaller number of Muslims.

The Qur'an accords a special place of honor to the Prophet's household ("God wishes to remove from you all impurity, O Members of the Family and to make you pure and without blemish", Qur'an, 33:33). The members of the Prophet's household are referred to in the Qur'an as Ahl-al Bait.

Sahih Hadith confirms that the term Ahl-al Bait refers to Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hussain, as well as Aqil, Ja'afar, Abbas and their offspring¹. Some other hadith refer only to Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hussain as Ahl-al Bait. On his return from the last pilgrimage, the Prophet stopped at a place called Gadeer e Qum and declared: "O people! I have left certain things; if you will love them you will never go astray. They are the Book, which is like a rope extending from the heaven to the earth and my family"². In addition, ahadith from both Sunni and Shi'a sources also confirm the exalted position of Ali as the "gateway to knowledge" and "heir" to the Prophet (Hadith: "Ali is to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there shall be no Prophet after me").

Central to the Ja'afariya Fiqh is the doctrine that the chain of authority for Fiqh flows from the Qur'an to the Sunnah to Ahl-al Bait and by inference, exclusively to the Imams among the Ahl-al Bait. By comparison, the Sunni position accepts the chain of authority from the Qur'an to the Sunnah to the Ijma of the companions and is based on the confirmed ahadith: "O people! I leave for you the Book of Allah and my Sunnah. If you follow them, you will never go astray."³ And again, "My ummah shall never agree upon an error". The two positions show up for the first time with extreme clarity in the question put to Ali ibn Abu Talib and Uthman bin Affan by the committee to nominate a Caliph after the assassination of Omar ibn al Khattab. The question was: "Will you conduct the affairs of the community in accordance with the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Sunnah of the two Shaykhs (Abu Bakr and Omar)?" Ali answered that he would follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Uthman said he would indeed follow the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and of the two Shaykhs and was nominated as the Caliph, demonstrating that the majority among the Companions had accepted this position.

Despite the differences on the issue of succession and of the disastrous civil wars, there were no separate schools of Fiqh for the first one hundred years after the Prophet. The differences were political; they were not on Fiqh or the Shariah. There are many instances when Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan asked for guidance from Ali ibn Abu Talib on specific issues of Fiqh, even though the two were locked in a bitter civil war. The Ahl-al Bait, specifically the house of Ali ibn Abu Talib and Fatimat uz Zahra (beloved daughter of the Prophet), had heard and transmitted many Ahadith directly

from the Prophet. The sayings of Ali, Nahjul-Balaga, are unsurpassed as a source for Islamic ethics and teaching.

The crystallization of Fiqh as a cultivated discipline occurred at the time of Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq (d. 765). Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq was a genius—a scholar, teacher, guide and Imam. He initiated and held halqas (circles) wherein the greatest scholars of the age would gather, consult and learn. Imam Abu Haneefa was a contemporary of Imam Ja'afar and attended many of the halqas at the home of Imam Ja'afar.

Like Imam Abu Haneefa, Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq did not write down the Fiqh named after him. He was the teacher who lectured and elaborated on the principles of Fiqh using the methodology of the quraa prevalent in early Islam. It was left to his disciplines to catalogue and document the teaching of Imam Ja'afar. The most important of the Imamiya writers was Muhammed ibn al Hasan al Qummi (d. 903). It was he who documented the doctrines of Wilayat and Imamate, although both doctrines were in existence since the period of Caliph Ali. Wilayat comes from the word wali (guardian, master, kinsmen) and is a central Shi'a doctrine. It affirmed that the guardianship of the Islamic community after the Prophet must be in the hands of a wali, the first of who was Ali ibn Abu Talib. The community must have a master and such mastership must reside exclusively and uniquely with Ahl-al Bait. As God has purified the household of the Prophet, the Imams are consequently pure and innocent and are uniquely and exclusively qualified to provide the wilayat for the community. The Ja'afariya School accepts the Imamate of twelve Imams: Imam Ali, Imam Hassan, Imam Hussain, Imam Ali Zainul Abedin, Imam Muhammed Baqir, Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq, Imam Musa Kazim, Imam Ali Rida, Imam Jawwad Razi, Imam Hadi, Imam Hasan Askari and Imam Muhammed Mahdi. Due to its acceptance of twelve Imams, the Ja'afariya School is referred to as Ithna Ashari (Those who believe in twelve Imams). The Ja'afariya School also believes in Isma, meaning that God shields the designated Imams from sin, religious error and forgetfulness.

It is in matters of personal law that the Ja'afariya Fiqh has certain differences with Sunni Fiqh. In matters relating to the community, the Ja'afariya Fiqh is stringent, like the Shafi'i Fiqh. On issues that have no precedence, it allows for ijtiḥad, much like the Hanafi School, which admits the process of istiḥsan.

The development of Ja'afariya Fiqh reflects the political fortunes of the Shi'a movement, much as Hanbali Fiqh also reflects the political circumstances of its era. After the tragedy of Karbala, the Ja'afariya movement was primarily apolitical, avoiding a head-on collision with the Omayyads. The Abbasid revolution seemed to present some hope since the Abbasids were fellow Hashemites. These hopes were dashed as the Abbasids first took advantage of the Shi'as and then persecuted them even more harshly than the Omayyads. Bereft of all hope for restoring to Ahl-al Bait the political authority they deserved, the Shi'a movement became (except for the Fatimid interlude) increasingly introspective.

However, there was no escape from the philosophical controversies raging in the 8th century. Much like its sister Sunnah Schools, the Ja'afariya Fiqh evolved along two broad lines during this period-the rationalist and the traditionalist. The rationalist schools evolved into the Akhbari School, which emphasized the primacy of relevant texts as a source of Fiqh. The acceptable texts included the Qur'an, Hadith of the Prophet and the Hadith of the Imams. The traditionalist Schools coalesced into the Usooli School and emphasized methodology and principle over textual authenticity. In its approach, the Usooli School of the Ja'afariya Fiqh was very much like the Usooli Schools of Imam Abu Haneefa and Imam Shafi'i. And, like the Hanafi School, it accepted ijtihaad as an acceptable methodology for Fiqh where there was no clear and explicit guidance from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

Thus the Ja'afariya and the Sunnah Schools of Fiqh are like different streams taking off from the same mighty lake and watering the Islamic landscape from different directions. Their deductions are often the same because they are based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, although their intermediate sources may be different.

Fiqh built a bridge for the Islamic civilization to the future. What strikes a student of history is the confidence and enthusiasm with which Muslims faced the ideas prevalent in the world at that time. By the 11th century, Islamic civilization had crystallized its response to its sister civilizations of the day. And this response was fundamentally different to the rational challenge of the Greeks and the spiritual challenge from the East. After a brief period of flirtation and experimentation, Greek thought was discarded and sent packing to the West. Ibn Rushd's Tahafuz al Tahafuz (circa 1190)

was almost a wistful goodbye of a Muslim scholar who was leaving his Islamic homeland and migrating to the Latin West. On the other hand, Islam responded to the challenge from the East by internalizing and Islamizing many of its spiritual elements.

Sufi thought flourished and after the destruction of the Mongols, took root and became the primary vehicle for the expansion of Islam. The Islamic archetype was to be a Hafiz, a Rumi or a Shah Waliullah, rather than Al Kindi or Abu Ali Sina or Al Baruni or Ibn Rushd. With the notable exception of Ibn Khaldun (d. 1407), the empiricists and rationalists of the past slowly disappeared. Science and civilization thus had entirely different relationships in the West and in Islam after the Middle Ages. The West adopted Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averoes) and their empirical/rational methods and made science (as we know it today) an integral part of their culture and civilization. The Muslims increasingly turned their back on the empirical/rational approach and became introverted, caught up in self-contemplation.

Those Muslims who declare that there is no conflict between science and religion in Islam must ponder over this. Having taken science out of the initial gambit, you cannot put it back in the middle game or the end game. You must change the initial gambit, namely, the fundamental assumptions on which Muslim civilization has built its world-view since the debate between the Mu'tazilites and the Asharites in the 9th century, to come up with a coherent and comprehensive philosophy of science and civilization.

With time, stagnation set in and what was once a bridge to the future became a bridge only to the past. The schools of Fiqh became mazhabs and got solidified. Heredity, official sanction, political events, tribal and national loyalties all played their historical part in this fixation. By the 11th century, Islamic civilization had become a city-based civilization. The Mu'tazilites and the Asharites had knocked the wind out of each other. The qaris, who had wandered through the desert in the early years of Islam teaching the Qur'an from hamlet to hamlet, had given way to professional teachers whose jobs depended on preserving the status quo. People longed for a break from controversies. A broad consensus developed that the existing schools of Fiqh were sufficient to meet the challenges of the day. Islam had successfully withstood the onslaught of Greek thought and had successfully accommodated the spiritual challenge from eastern religions. It appeared

that the civilizational interfaces between Islam and its sister civilizations of the day had been well defined. It was now time to rest the case. The door to *ijtihad* was therefore closed and people inculcated *taqleed* (to copy or to follow). They became Sunni, Shi'a, Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, Ja'afari, Zaidi and Fatimid.

Political developments also contributed to intellectual stagnation. In the 9th century, the Fatimids conquered Egypt and ruled over a predominantly Sunni population using the Fatimid Fiqh. The Fatimid challenge elicited a Turkish response as champions of the Sunni Fiqh. The central authority of the Caliphate disintegrated and in its place emerged autonomous sultanates and emirates. The 16th century saw the emergence of three mighty dynasties, those of the Ottomans, the Safavids and the great Moghuls. The Safavids adopted the Ja'afariya Fiqh whereas the Ottomans and the Moghuls championed the Hanafi Fiqh. Certain ideological differences were inevitable, but *mazhab* was often used in their mutual warfare for the control of border areas. Only geography and the relatively primitive technology of the day prevented them from waging total war against each other. Nonetheless, their respective parochial policies ensured that by the 17th century, Persia was primarily Ithna Ashari, whereas India, Pakistan, Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire were predominantly Hanafi. The last major attempt by a ruler to bring about reconciliation between Shi'a and Sunni *mazhabs* was Nadir Shah. Initially, a benevolent ruler, he became a miser after he sacked Delhi and made off with its great loot (1739). Returning to Persia, he gathered the Sunni and Shi'a Ulema in an attempt to reconcile their historical fragmentation. For this effort, both the Sunnis and the Shi'as abused him, which made him more of a despot. He died a miser, scornful of both Sunni and Shi'a Ulema and in turn scorned by history.

The death of *ijtihad* is sometimes blamed on the Mongol and Tatar invasions. This is not historically correct. The process of stagnation was well under way before the double hammer of Crusader invasions (11th, 12th and 13th centuries) and Mongol destructions (13th century) brought an end to the Baghdad Caliphate. These external events, however, helped to consolidate the status quo. Faced with the possibility of extinction, Islamic civilization increasingly turned inwards to its own inner soul. And the mantle of intellectual leadership passed from the *qura'a* and the *fukha* to the *sufis*.

The major schools of Fiqh clearly served the needs of early Muslims, ensured social cohesion, protected the community from the ideas of foreign civilizations and safeguarded it during historical crises. However, the issues that were addressed reflected the condition of the Muslims at that time. In the 8th century, Islam was politically and militarily dominant in West Asia and the Mediterranean. Certainly, there was interaction with the civilizations of Greece, China and India but due to the primitive technology of the day, each civilization was more or less autonomous in its own region of influence. The challenge before the Muslims was first to sort out and stabilize their own internal relationships and then to define their relationship with the ideas from other civilizations. And this they achieved in the context of the times, separating “Dar al Islam ‘ from “Dar al Harab”. Dar al Islam was where Fiqh was applied. Dar al Harab was that other world where the “infidels” lived and which had to be challenged.

That paradigm needs reexamination. Today, fully a third of all Muslims live in countries that are predominantly non-Muslim. Fiqh is not a static tool. It is the historical dimension of the Shariah. In a shrinking world, drawn together by technology, where the information revolution has made national boundaries porous, the civilizational interfaces are different from those of the 8th and 9th centuries.

In the 21st century, Islam faces not the rationalism of the Greeks, or the abnegation of the Buddhists, or the polytheism of the Vedics but the global hegemony from a materialist civilization opposed to any form of religion. The focus of this civilization is economic centralization. In its inexorable thirst for centralization, today’s global materialist civilization has co-opted science, technology, philosophy, ethics, politics and has marginalized religion itself. The great issues of the day are primarily economic, not spiritual. Today, all people of religion, the

Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus are in the same boat, confronted with defining their interfaces with each other and with this global, materialist civilization. Clearly, a coherent response has yet to emerge from the Muslim ulema.

1. Ref: Sahih Muslim, Hadith 5920.

2. Ref: Tradition number 874 from Sahih Tirmidhi as related by Zaid ibn Arkam, among the traditions taken from Kanz ul Ummal.

3. Ref: Hijjatul Wida, Farewell speech at the Mount of Arafat, on the authority of Rabiah ibn Umayyah, who repeated the sermon after him.

The Age of Reason — The Caliphs Harun and Mamun

It was a moment in history when the Islamic civilization opened its doors to new ideas from the East and from the West. The confident Muslims took these ideas and remolded them in a uniquely Islamic mold. Out of this caldron came Islamic art, architecture, astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, medicine, music, philosophy and ethics. Indeed the very process of Fiqh and its application to societal problems was profoundly influenced by the historical context of the times.

Harun al Rashid was the son of al Mansur and was the fourth in the Abbasid dynasty. Ascending the throne as a young man of twenty-two in the year 786, he immediately faced internal revolts and external invasion. Regional revolts in Africa were crushed, tribal revolts from the Qais and Quzhaa in Egypt were contained and sectarian revolts from the Alavis were controlled. The Byzantines were held at bay and forced to pay tribute. For 23 years he ruled an empire that had welded together a broad arc of the earth extending from China, bordering India and Byzantium through the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean. Herein men, material and ideas could flow freely across continental divides. However, Harun is remembered not for his empire building, but for building the edifice of a brilliant civilization.

It was the golden age of Islam. It was not the fabulous wealth of the empire or the fairy tales of the Arabian Nights that made it golden; it was the strength of its ideas and its contributions to human thought. As the empire had grown, it had come into contact with ideas from classical Greek, Indian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Hindu civilizations. The process of translation and understanding of global ideas was well under way since the time of al Mansur. But it received a quantum boost from Harun and Mamun.

Harun established a School of translation Bait ul Hikmah (house of wisdom) and surrounded himself with men of learning. His administration was in the hands of viziers of exceptional capabilities, the Bermecides. His courtiers included great juris doctors, poets, musicians, logicians, mathematicians, writers, scientists, men of culture and scholars of Fiqh. Ibn Hayyan (d. 815), who invented the science of chemistry, worked at the court of Harun. The scholars who were engaged in the work of translation included Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Hindus. From Greece came the works of Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Galen, Hippocratis, Archimedes, Euclid, Ptolemy, Demosthenes and Pythagoras. From India arrived a delegation with the Siddhanta of Brahmagupta, Indian numerals, the concept of zero and Ayurvedic medicine. From China came the science of alchemy and the technologies of paper, silk and pottery. The Zoroastrians brought in the disciplines of administration, agriculture and irrigation. The Muslims learned from these sources and gave to the world algebra, chemistry, sociology and the concept of infinity.

What gave the Muslims the confidence to face other civilizations was their faith. With a confidence firmly rooted in revelation, the Muslims faced other civilizations, absorbing that which they found valid and transforming it in the image of their own belief. The Qur'an invites men and women to learn from nature, to reflect on the patterns therein, to mold and shape nature so that they may inculcate wisdom. "We shall show them our Signs on the horizon and within their souls until it is manifest unto them that it is the Truth" (Qur'an, 41:53). It is during this period that we see the emergence of the archetype of classical Islamic civilization, namely the Hakim (meaning, a person of wisdom). In Islam, a scientist is not a specialist who looks at nature from the outside, but a man of wisdom who looks at nature from within and integrates his knowledge into an essential whole. The quest of the Hakim is not just knowledge for the sake of knowledge but the realization of the essential Unity that pervades creation and the interrelationships that demonstrate the wisdom of God.

What Harun started, his son Mamun sought to complete. Mamun was a scholar in his own right, had studied medicine, Fiqh, logic and was a Hafiz e Qur'an. He sent delegations to Constantinople and the courts of Indian and Chinese princes asking them to send classical books and scholars. He encouraged the translators and gave them handsome rewards. Perhaps the

story of this period is best told by the great men of the era. The first philosopher of Islam, al Kindi (d. 873), worked at this time in Iraq. The celebrated mathematician al Khwarizmi (d. 863) worked at the court of Mamun. Al Khwarizmi is best known for the recurring method of solving mathematical problems, which is used even today and is called algorithms. He studied for a while in Baghdad and is also reported to have traveled to India. Al Khwarizmi invented the word algebra (from the Arabic word j-b-r, meaning to force, beat or multiply), introduced the Indian numeral system to the Muslim world (from where it traveled to Europe and became the “Arabic” numeral system), institutionalized the use of the decimal in mathematics and invented the empirical method (knowledge based on measurement) in astronomy. He wrote several books on geography and astronomy and cooperated in the measurement of the distance of an arc across the globe. The world celebrates the name of Al Khwarizmi to this day by using “algorithms” in every discipline of science and engineering.

It was the intellectual explosion created at the time of Harun and Mamun that propelled science into the forefront of knowledge and made Islamic civilization the beacon of learning for five hundred years. The work done by the translation schools of Baghdad made possible the later works of the physician al Razi (d. 925), historian al Masudi (d. 956), the physician Abu Ali Sina (d. 1037), the physicist al Hazen (d.1039), the historian al Baruni (d. 1051), the mathematician Omar Khayyam (d.1132) and the philosopher Ibn Rushd (d.1198).

The age of Harun and Mamun was also an age of contradictions. Indeed, no other period in Islamic history illustrates with such clarity the schizophrenic attitude of Muslims towards their own history, as does the age of Harun and Mamun. On the one hand, Muslims take pride in its accomplishments. On the other, they reject the values on which those achievements were based. Muslims exude great pride in the scientists and philosophers of the era, especially in their dialectic with the West. But they reject the intellectual foundation on which these scientists and philosophers based their work.

The age of Harun and Mamun was the age of reason. Mamun, in particular, took the rationalists in full embrace. The Mu’tazilites were the rational arm of Islam. Mamun made Mu’tazilite doctrines the official court dogma. We have explained in Chapter 11 how the Mu’tazilites

overextended their reach. They even applied their methodology to the Divine Word and came up with the doctrine of “createdness” of the Qur’an. In simplified terms, this is the error one falls into when a hierarchy of knowledge is built wherein reason is placed above revelation. The Mu’tazilites applied their rational tools to revelation without sufficient understanding of the phenomenon of time or its relevance to the nature of physics. In the process, they fell flat on their face. Instead of owning up to their errors and correcting them, they became defensive and became increasingly oppressive in forcing their views on others.

Mamun’s successors applied the whip with increasing fervor to enforce conformity with the official dogma. But the ulema would not buy the theory that the Qur’an was created. Imam Hanbal fought a lifelong battle with Mamun on this issue and was jailed for over twenty years. Any idea that compromised the transcendence of the Qur’an was unacceptable to Imam Hanbal. Faced with determined opposition, the Mu’tazilite doctrine was repudiated by Caliph Mutawakkil (d. 861). Thereafter, the rationalists were tortured and killed and their properties confiscated. Al Ashari (d. 936) and his disciples tried to reconcile the rational and transcendental approaches by suggesting a “theory of occasionalism”. The Asharite ideas got accepted and were absorbed into the Islamic body politic and have continued to influence

Muslim thinking to this day. The intellectual approach of the rationalists, philosophers and scientists was forsaken and sent packing to the Latin West where it was embraced with open arms and was used to lay the foundation of the modern global civilization.

Thus it was that the Muslim world came upon rational ideas, adopted them, experimented with them and finally threw them out. The historical lesson of the age of Harun and Mamun is that a fresh effort must be made to incorporate philosophy and science within the framework of Islamic civilization based on Tawhid. The issue is one of constructing a hierarchy of knowledge wherein the transcendence of revelation is preserved in accordance with Tawhid, but wherein reason and the free will of man are accorded honor and respect. The Mu’tazilites were right in claiming that man was the architect of his own fortunes but they erred in asserting that human reason has a larger reach than the Divine Word. Humankind is not autonomous. The outcome of human effort is a moment of Divine Grace.

No person can predict with certainty the outcome of an action. The Asharites were right in postulating that at each moment of time Divine Grace intervenes to dispose of all affairs. But they were not correct in limiting the power of human free will. Human reason and human free will are endowed with the possibility of infinity, but this infinity collapses (fana) before the infinity of Divine transcendence.

Philosophy and Science in the Classical Age

The Qur'an bestows upon humankind the keys to the heavens and the earth ("Do you not see that God has made subject to thee all that is between the heavens and the earth", Qur'an, 31:20). In the golden age of their history, Muslims used these keys to unlock the secrets of nature and they created a civilization that was the marvel of the world. Then, they overreached themselves. They tried these keys to unlock the mysteries of revelation itself. In the process, they stumbled. Reaction set in and at times it was violent. The keys were dropped and the door to philosophical inquiry was closed. Those who indulged in natural science continued to be tolerated but only on the fringes of the intellectual society. Nature, in turn, closed its doors on the Muslims. And the riches of the world were bequeathed to other civilizations.

The initial thrust of Islamic thought was comprehensive. It embraced Fiqh, kalam, logic, tasawwuf, politics, sociology, science and technology. The approach was at once rational and empirical but was always based on the over-arching paradigm of Tawhid. For more than five hundred years, during the era of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad (750 to 1258), Muslim scientists made fundamental contributions to the understanding of nature and sought to control it through knowledge rather than submit to it through superstition. Some of these contributions changed the basic way humankind related to God's creation. Mathematics and science do not flourish in a vacuum. They develop and are cultivated by intellectual frameworks, which are deeply influenced by religious beliefs. Religious paradigms color the way men and women look at nature. For instance, Muslims came up with the concept of infinity because they believed in the transcendence of the Divine. A civilization, which believed in the finiteness of the Divine, could not have come up with this concept. The Muslims also invented algebra because they believed that the many patterns in nature derive their origin from unity. Similarly, the Mayans in the Americas and the Hindus in India

discovered independently the concept of zero. The Hindus did so because of their belief in the cycle of birth and death. Between each cycle there is a moment of rest (su-na-ya in Sanskrit), which became sa-fa-ra in Arabic and zero in English. The Mayan concept of zero is based on the cyclic change of seasons and is expressed implicitly in the zigzag patterns of the earliest Native American tribes, the Anasazis, which may be seen in petroglyphs in the American southwest.

In this chapter, we pay but a brief tribute to the Muslim thinkers and men of science who made a difference to the onward march of human civilization. These scholars not only nourished the Islamic civilization but also added to the reservoir of human knowledge and passed on the torch to other civilizations.

Muhammed bin Musa al Khwarizmi (d. 840) lived in the heyday of Islamic science during the period of Caliph Mamun. He integrated the mathematical knowledge of the Greek and Indian Schools and made his own first rate contributions. He is best known for a regressive method of mathematical analysis for which the world pays him tribute to this day by calling this method “algorithm”. He is known as the father of algebra. He gave analytical solutions to quadratic equations, developed trigonometric sine and tangent functions, invented the concept of differentiation, developed astronomical tables, worked on clocks and astrolabes and was a member of the team that measured the degree of an arc around the earth’s circumference that was ordered by Caliph Mamun.

Ali Ibn Rabbah al Tabari (d. 870), born to Jewish parents, embraced Islam and went on to become one of the most distinguished physicians of the classical period. His seven-volume encyclopedia of medicine is the most comprehensive collection of medical knowledge up to his time. In it, Al Tabari covers medical principles, anatomy, diet, diseases of different parts of the body and their causes, taste and color, drugs and medicine and the influence of climate on health. He has included a discussion of Ayurvedic (Indian) medicine.

Yaqub Ibn Ishaq al Kindi (d. 873) was employed at the court of Mamun and made basic contributions to the sciences of music, mathematics, chemistry and astronomy. A Mu’tazilite, he too fell out of favor with the Baghdad court when Al Mutawakkil became the Caliph and suffered at the hands of the Asharites. He analyzed the correspondence between the

frequency of notes and their pitch and studied the synthesis of notes to produce musical harmony. He understood the chemical nature of different elements and advanced the position that base metals could not be converted into gold, a position contrary to that of the alchemists of the day. He was the first one to study the proper dosage of medicines for curing diseases of the body.

Muhammed Ibn Zakariya al Razi (d. 930) was one of the greatest physicians of the 10th century. He was the first to identify and compare smallpox and chicken pox and emphasize the importance of diet and stress on health. He made an exhaustive compilation of medical knowledge that was available from Greek and Muslim sources. He was also an applied scientist, discovered numerous chemical reactions, documented the properties of chemicals and founded separate disciplines for organic and inorganic chemistry. He was the first to produce sulfuric acid and used his extensive chemical knowledge to formulate and synthesize compound medicines. Razi was a Mu'tazilite and held space and time to be a continuum. Like most Mu'tazilites, he too was looked upon with suspicion by fellow Muslims of his age.

Abul Hasan Ali al Masudi (d. 957) was the first empirical historian of Islam. A Mu'tazilite philosopher, he served the Fatimid court of Cairo, where the reception for rational ideas was more favorable than in Abbasid Baghdad. He traveled through Persia, India, Sri Lanka, Malaya, China, Madagascar, East Africa and North Africa and documented his observations about these regions and their people in a thirty-volume documentary. He added critical analysis to the historical process and presaged the great philosopher of the Maghrib, Ibn Khaldun, by five hundred years.

Abu Ali al Hussain Ibn Sina (d. 1037), perhaps the greatest scientist of the Middle Ages, was born near Bukhara in the year 980. A brilliant student, he mastered philosophy, medicine, mathematics and the Qur'anic sciences before he was seventeen. His capabilities soon attracted attention from the Seljuk sultans and emirs who were competing at the time both for political power and intellectual patronage. Ibn Sina found successive employment with the ruler of Bukhara, Khwarazm, Hamadan and Isfahan. He is best known in the world of science for his monumental work *Qanun fi al Tibb*, an encyclopedia of all of the medical knowledge known at that time. The *Qanun* was translated into Latin and was a standard text in the universities

of Europe for 600 years. His original contributions include recognition of contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, the propagation of diseases by water and food, the relationship between mental well-being and physical health, identification and cataloguing of medical drugs, identification of meningitis, healthful child care and human anatomy. In addition, Ibn Sina made original contributions to the mathematics of music, invented a calculator similar to a vernier, built a device similar to a thermometer, experimented and ruled out the possibility of transmutation of elements and elaborated on the concepts of force, heat, energy and the speed of light. He also sought to reconcile rational/empirical methods with Qur'anic injunctions. For his rationalist views, he too was looked upon by later Muslims as somewhat of a heretic. Consequently, his impact was felt more in Europe than in Asia and Africa.

Abu Raihan al Baruni (d. 1048) was one of the foremost historians and geographers of Islam. Born in Khorasan, he mastered physics, mathematics and kalam at an early age. Soon he caught the attention of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, who took al Baruni along in his campaigns to India. Al Baruni, a keen observer, learned the mathematics, religion, philosophy and sociology of the Hindus and recorded it in his classic masterpiece, Kitabal Hind. Almost all of our knowledge of medieval India comes to us from the writings of this scholar. Upon his return from India, he wrote his Qanun e Masoodi, in which he combined the mathematics of India with the mathematics of Greece. He discussed the Indian numerical system and pointed out the usefulness of the decimal. He was the inventor of the empirical method in astronomy and insisted on verifying stellar movements through observation. He discussed the rotation of the earth and calculated correctly the latitude and longitude of several important cities. He made observations on the relative velocity of sound and light and applied hydrodynamic principles to transfer water between wells. In a later book, Kitab al Saidana, he combined the Indian Ayurvedic medicine with the known Arabic medicine.

Giyasuddin Abdul Fateh Omar al Khayyam (d. 1123) was born in Nishapur in Khorasan. He traveled to and studied at the well-known centers of learning in the Islamic East, including Nishapur, Samarqand, Bukhara and Isfahan. One of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers of his age, his lasting contribution was the compilation of the Jalalian calendar, which

was used in the Islamic world until recent years. It is more accurate than the Gregorian calendar used in the modern world. He studied and offered solutions to third degree equations using both algebraic and geometric approaches. Omar Khayyam is the one who developed the binomial expansion and formulated the binomial theorem. He did experiments on the relative weights of materials and correctly measured the specific gravity of several elements. But Omar Khayyam is best known in the world today as the author of the Rubaiyat, thanks to its translation into the English language in the 19th century. The Rubaiyat illustrates the exquisite sensitivity of his keen intellect as well as the spirituality of Islamic tasawwuf.

Abu Abdallah Muhammed al Idrisi (d. 1166) was a Spaniard and studied in Cordoba and Seville. He lived at a time when Crusader attacks against Muslim territories in Palestine, North Africa and Spain were at their height. The Crusaders brought the Latins into contact with the more advanced civilization of the Muslims. In particular, Sicily and southern Italy had just changed hands from the Muslims to the Christians. Arabic knowledge was in demand. Roger II, King of Sicily, reached out and employed some of the leading Muslim scientists of the day. Al Idrisi was one of them. For this reason, he won the displeasure of contemporary Muslims who believed that Al Idrisi gave comfort to the enemy. Al Idrisi is noted for his contributions to geography. He compiled all the known information about Asia, Europe and North Africa and produced a map, which was considered a standard for many centuries. In addition, he was a keen observer of people and their habitat including plants, animals and climate. He studied plants for their medical applications, collected data from Greece, India, Persia and Africa and added to the treatment of diseases using natural drugs.

Abul Waleed Muhammed Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) was the greatest philosopher the world has known since Aristotle. Born into a scholarly family of Spain, he studied under the masters of the age and had access to the extensive libraries in Cordoba. Spain was in turmoil and Ibn Rushd found employment with Abu Yaqub, ruler of Morocco. Some of the rationalist views of Ibn Rushd, however, won the displeasure of his benefactor. His books were burnt and he was banished from the court. The world knows Ibn Rushd for his commentaries on Aristotle. These were written at three levels: a brief summary, an intermediate expose and a

detailed commentary. His works were translated into Latin and were a major contributor to the transmission of rational thought to the West. The Muslim East, reeling as it was from a reaction to some of the Mu'tazilite ideas, turned its back on Ibn Rushd. This great man is known instead in the Muslim world for his work *Tahafuz al Tahafuz* (Repudiation of the Repudiated), a dialectic on Al Ghazzali's work *Tahafuz al Filasafa* (Repudiation of Philosophy). Ibn Rushd's attempts to rekindle philosophical and scientific inquiry in the Muslim mind were unsuccessful and Islam was to find its strength as well as its solace in spirituality and tasawwuf. In addition to philosophy, Ibn Rushd wrote twenty books on medicine and made major contributions to the science of music.

Nasir Uddin al Tusi (d. 1274) made his primary contributions under the Mongol invader Hulagu Khan. At the order of the Il-Khan, he established the great observatory at Maragha. He was the inventor of the two-axis gimbal, which he used extensively in the study of spherical trigonometry. He provided solutions to several problems in spherical trigonometry and applied them to celestial mechanics. His astronomical tables were standard reference material in Europe and China until the 15 th century. Al Tusi was also a philosopher, mutakallim and physician.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE TURKS

Summary

History needs men and women of thought and those of action. In the 8th and 9th centuries, the Arabs, Persians, Spaniards and Africans had laid the intellectual foundation of Islam. In the 10th century, the Turks provided the primal energy to renew Islamic civilization and supplied the men and women of action who propelled it for over a thousand years. The Turks tower over the last thousand years as the dominating force in Islamic history. They substituted the Sultanate for the Caliphate as the effective temporal power in Islam (10th century), defended the Abbasid orthodoxy against the Fatimid challenge (11th century) and provided the shield against the Crusaders (12th and 13th centuries). They stopped the Mongols at the gates of Jerusalem (13th century), opened up Anatolia and Eastern Europe to Islamic penetration (11th through 14th centuries) and provided Islamic history with women sovereigns (13th century). They won back West Asia from the Tatars after the devastations of Timurlane (15th century), captured the Byzantine capital of Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453 and advanced into Central Europe with a siege of Vienna in 1526 and again in 1683. They militarily dominated Eurasia for more than five hundred years, defended the Muslims of North Africa against the Spaniards (16th century) and contained the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean (16th century). They made the term ghazi a respectable term in the languages spoken by Muslims, gave the world a distinct architectural style with its sleek minarets, produced master-builders like Sinan, reinforced the preeminence of tasawwuf in the Islamic body politic and reigned over the longest lasting dynasty the world has even known (the Ottomans).

Turks on Center Stage

In the second half of the last millennium (768-965), three mass conversions took place that sealed the fate of Eurasia. The Germans were inducted into the Latin Church, the Turks accepted Islam and the Russians chose the Eastern Orthodox faith. The history of the Old World during the last thousand years is but a footnote to these galactic events.

Charlemagne (768-814) played the first gambit in this global chess game. By the time he ascended the throne of France, the geopolitical situation in the eastern Mediterranean had undergone major changes. Byzantium had lost Egypt and Syria to the Muslims and was under pressure from the Lombards in northern Italy. The Roman Popes could no longer count on the military protection of a weakened Byzantium. In 751, to assert their independence from the Byzantines, the Roman Pope appointed Pepin, predecessor of Charlemagne, as the King of the Holy Roman Empire. Charlemagne inherited this title. An alliance was thus forged between the Church and State that provided a foundation for the Carolingian Empire and proved to be the first stage in the awakening of Western Europe from its Dark Ages.

Charlemagne took his title of Holy Roman Emperor seriously. In 778, he launched a campaign against the Muslims in Spain. He had little success except in the border areas around Barcelona. Turning to the southeast he overran the Lombards, captured a large treasure from them and used it to finance further conquests. Then he turned his attention to the northeast and occupied northern Germany. At its height, Charlemagne's empire (the Carolingian empire) embraced France, Germany, Austria and northern Italy.

At the time, most of the eastern Germans (the Ostrogoths) were pagan. Charlemagne waged a relentless war against them, subduing and baptizing them with force. Each time he turned his back, the Germans rebelled against the imposed faith and Charles would return with increasing ferocity. In one single campaign in the year 782, he killed over 4,000 Germans for their recalcitrance. It was not until 804 that Charlemagne's control of

central and northern Germany was consolidated. And it was not until a hundred years later that the combined power of Frankish arms and monastic priests finally succeeded in converting the Germans. Thereafter, starting with the 10th century, the Germans provided their immense energy for the revival of Western Europe and were in the vanguard of the Crusader armies in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The next major move was the acceptance of Islam by the Turks. This happened gradually, over a period of two centuries, from 800 to 1000. The Turks were a family of tribes inhabiting the vast territories on the plateaus of Central Asia. In the sixth century they formed a small kingdom in Turkistan. When it broke up, the Turks were scattered over territories from Mongolia to Russia and the borders of Persia. Some of them were settled, but most lived as nomads who made frequent raids into China and Persia. They were bound together by a common language and a common shamanist faith. In 751 the Muslims won the Battle of Talas over the Chinese and established the Rivers Oxus and Talas as boundaries between the Caliphate and the Ming Empire of China. The border areas of Khorasan were incorporated into the Caliphate, prospered and great cities like Samarqand and Bukhara grew up. The powerful Caliphs kept the Turks at bay. But due to their reputation as good soldiers and their demonstrated skills on the battlefield, their services were in great demand in the armed forces of Baghdad and of the provincial rulers and the Turks made their way back into the centers of power.

Islam had entered the world stage proclaiming the transcendence of Tawhid. It was this transcendence that animated Islamic history between 622 and 664, from the Hijra of the Prophet to the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Tawhid provided the energy that propelled

Islam onto the world stage. This changed with the Omayyads. Muawiya was the first soldier-emir of Islam. Thenceforth, dynastic rule prevailed and the Caliphate was more often propped up by military power than by piety. The Turks possessed in abundance the martial qualities required to compete in an age dominated by soldiers. They were superb horseman and fierce warriors, known for their courage, steadfastness and propensity for justice. However, the primary characteristic that stood them well was their allegiance to the clan and dedication to their chief. This tribal cohesion provided the cement in their triumph over more settled nations. Their entry

into the fold of Islam was slow and deliberate, but once inside, they quickly rose to the center stage of power, displacing both the Arabs and the Persians. And there they remained for eight centuries, until the rules of competition for power changed; the merchants of Europe rose to dominate the world (circa 1750) and were in turn supplanted by the bankers in Europe and America (1800-1900).

The Abbasid Caliph al Mu'tasim (833-842) was the first one to create a Turkish bodyguard. He did this to balance off the power between the old Arab aristocracy and the rising power of the Persians in the empire. But the Turks had other ideas. Al Mu'tasim's successors were feeble and incompetent and the Caliphate in Baghdad rapidly lost its political power. Far away provinces first became autonomous and then declared their independence. The Aghlabids established their rule over the Maghrib, in modern day Algeria and Morocco. The Turks, who had rapidly risen through the military ranks and had been appointed governors in several of the provinces, were not far behind. By the reign of Mutawakkil (847-861) the Turkish guards had become the effective power brokers in Baghdad. In 868, Ahmed bin Tulun, a Turk, seized power in Cairo and established the Tulunid dynasty in Egypt. Another Turkish tribe, the Ikhshidids displaced the Tulunids and ruled Egypt from 933 until the Fatimids defeated them in 969. And it was a Turkish General, Jawhar, who led the Fatimid armies in their victorious march on Cairo.

To the east, the Samanids ruled Khorasan (874-999). With their capital in Bukhara, the Samanids created a brilliant urban-based civilization known for its industry, agriculture and great centers of learning. The Tahirids held Nishapur and competed with the Samanids for power and prestige. These principalities ruled in the name of the Abbasid Caliphs. But in practice, they were independent with the right to mint their own coins and proclaim their own names in the Friday khutba. It was during this period, in 921, that the Bulgars, a Turkish tribe, accepted Islam. The Bulgars, along with Arab and Jewish merchants, carried on a brisk slave trade with the Vikings along the Volga River. The large number of Abbasid coins found recently in Scandinavia testifies to the extent of the trade. In 961, the Oghuz family from the Caspian Sea area, forerunners of the Seljuks, entered Islam. The Turks carried their mission of Islam into the very heart of Russia, into Moscow and Kiev. However, in 988, the Russian Count Vladimir of Kiev

spurned the invitation of the Bulgars to accept Islam. Instead, he embraced the Eastern Orthodox faith, which was at the time championed by the Byzantines based in Constantinople. The die was now cast with the Turks in the fold of Islam, the Russian and Eastern Slavs under the Eastern Orthodox faith and the Germans under the Roman Catholic Church.

The Battle of Manzikert

The Turks forced their way onto the world stage with thunderous momentum. Their galactic advance is marked by three critical events that provide historic benchmarks: the hiring of a Turkish guard by the Abbasid Caliph al Mu'tasim (833); the disappearance of the Samanid State based in Bukhara (999); and finally, the Battle of Manzikert (August 1072).

After Caliph al Mu'tasim, the Abbasids in Baghdad were in disarray. A series of incompetent successors left the Caliphate ineffective and incapable of ruling the vast territories extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indus River. The Turkish bodyguard seized upon this opportunity and became the power broker. In a brief span of nine years, between 861 and 870, the Turks brought into power and then got rid of three Caliphs. The weakness of Baghdad encouraged local rulers to assert themselves. By the year 850, the Aghlabids in Algeria and Morocco were minting coins in their own name. In 868 a Turkish general, Ahmed ibn Tulun, seized control of Egypt and Syria and established the Tulunid dynasty. The Ithna Ashari Buyids, challenging the authority of the Sunni Abbasids, seized control of Iraq in 945 and held Baghdad itself under their sway. In 900 the Samanids brought Khorasan under their control and established their authority from the Oxus River in Central Asia into the very heart of Persia. Trade with India and China along the silk route and with the Vikings through the Volga River into Europe brought them prosperity. The Samanids are best remembered for their patronage of science, culture and Farsi literature. Ibn Sina, perhaps the most celebrated scientist of the Middle Ages, did his work in Khorasan under the Samanids.

As long as the powerful and brilliant court of the Samanids maintained its power, the Turkish tribes beyond the Oxus River were kept at bay. But powerful internal forces were operating within the Islamic body politic that weakened the Samanids. Towards the end of the 10th century, the global struggle between the (Shi'a) Fatimids based in Cairo and the (Sunni) Abbasids based in Baghdad was at its height. The world body of Muslims was rent asunder by two competing visions of Islam. The Fatimids, after

overrunning North Africa and Egypt (969), projected themselves into Syria and the Hejaz. Emirs and rulers as far away as Multan (in modern Pakistan) followed the Fatimid lead. The Samanid emirs could not escape these convulsions. One of the Samanids, Nasr al Saeed, who ruled Bukhara from 914 to 943, favored the Fatimids. The Khorasanis, who were predominantly Sunni, resented this and the Samanids lost their legitimacy in the eyes of a majority of their subjects. There were economic reasons as well. The Fatimids in Cairo successfully diverted trade between India and Europe from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. The result was prosperity for Egypt and impoverishment of the Samanids in Khorasan and the Buyids in Iraq. The military burden of containing the Turks to the north took its toll as well. Gradually, power slipped from their hands and the Samanid dynasty disappeared in 999.

The dissolution of the Samanids opened the floodgates to Turkish migrations. The Kara-Khanis, a Turkish tribe, crossed the Oxus River and occupied Bukhara in 999. In 962, Alaptagin established another powerful Turkish dynasty further to the south, in Ghazna. The Turkish tribes were restless, constantly on the move and challenging each other for turf. In the subsequent decade, another general Sabughtagin gained control of Ghazna (977). It was Sabughtagin's son Mahmud who raided India 17 times between 1000 and 1030. Mahmud tried to contain the Turkish flood by dispersing the Turkish tribes and settling them in the far-flung areas of Khorasan. But this was in vain. Between 950 and 1000, a group of Turkish tribes, the Oghuz, who inhabited the areas north of the Caspian Sea, accepted Islam and migrated south to Khorasan. The Oghuz Turks were welded into a remarkable fighting force under their leader Seljuk. Seljuk's son Arsalan fought Mahmud of

Ghazna to a stalemate. When Mahmud died (1030), the tide turned decidedly in favor of the Seljuks.

The Seljuks were fearless warriors. They considered it their duty to struggle in the path of faith. It was they who introduced the term ghazi (from the Arabic word ghazza, namely armed struggle) into languages spoken by Muslims. As followers of the Hanafi Fiqh, they championed the Sunnis against the Fatimids. The Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad, under increasing military pressure from the Fatimids in Egypt and the Byzantines in Syria, were only too glad to accept the protection of the Seljuks.

The Ithna Ashari Buyids held Iraq under the leadership of Basasiri who formed an alliance with the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir of Egypt to contain the Seljuks. Meanwhile, Taghril Beg had succeeded Arsalan (1036) and a fierce struggle ensued between him and Basasiri for the control of Baghdad itself. The city changed hands several times between 1056 and 1060. Finally, Taghril fought his way into Baghdad in 1060. Basasiri was killed in combat. With Basasiri's death, the Fatimid challenge receded from Persia and Iraq. In 1058, Taghril was anointed by the Abbasid Caliph Kaim as "Sultan of the East and the West", charged with the authority to rule and the responsibility to protect the orthodox (Sunni) vision of Islam and defend the ummah against enemies of the faith. The Turks valiantly discharged this role for over 800 years.

By 1058, the Turks had changed the character of the Caliphate and without abolishing it, they had replaced it with a new institution, the Sultanate. This institution prospered during the age of the soldiers (through the 18 th century) and has survived to this day in parts of the Islamic world.

Taking advantage of the internal struggles among Muslims, the Byzantines occupied Armenia and thrust deep into Syria. Soon, this thrust came up against the Turks whose relentless advance in search of pastureland had taken them to the borders of Anatolia. Taghril died childless in 1063 and his nephew Alap Arsalan assumed the leadership of the Seljuks. The Byzantines tried to stem the Turkish tide but were defeated in a series of skirmishes (1063 to 1070). In desperation, the Byzantine Emperor Romanus Diagonus raised a huge army consisting of Greek, Russian, French and Italian mercenaries and marched against Alap Arsalan. The two armies met at Manzikert, near Lake Van, in August 1072. The French mercenaries quarreled with the Emperor before the battle began and left the battlefield. The static defense of the Byzantines was no match for the rapid movements of the Turkish cavalry. The Seljuks cut down the Byzantines, Emperor Diagonus was taken prisoner and the day belonged to the Turks. Alap Arsalan was as chivalrous in victory as he was swift on the battlefield. He sent the Emperor back to Constantinople under military escort.

The Battle of Manzikert was a momentous event and a turning point in global history. It destroyed Greek power in Asia Minor and opened it up to Turkish settlements. The Turks, surging forward in wave after wave in search of pastureland, moved deeper into Anatolia. The Greek landlords and

fiefs, abandoned to their fate by the retreating Byzantine armies, fled. The peasants accepted Islam and joined up with the advancing Turks. Several groups of Ghazis emerged, each marching forth deeper towards Constantinople (modern Istanbul) to the West and towards the Black Sea to the north. It was only a matter of time before the Ghazis would cross the Straits of Dardanelles into Europe. Thus Alap Arslan accomplished what Emir Muawiya could not accomplish in 668 and what successive Abbasid Caliphs only dreamed of achieving for four hundred years, namely, opening up Anatolia to Islamic penetration.

The disaster at Manzikert raised a general alarm in the Latin West. The cries of help from Emperor Diagonus and his son Alexius reverberated through the Church of Rome and produced, 25 years later, in 1096, the preaching of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II.

The Assassins' Dagger

More than a thousand years before modern nations established cloak and dagger intelligence agencies, the art of political assassination was perfected in West Asia. The architect of this art was Hassan al Sabbah, a shadowy character shrouded in exotic mystery about whom as much information has come down to us as misinformation.

The Seljuks tilted the internal balance of power within the Islamic community decidedly in favor of the Sunnis. The victory of Taghril Beg over a combined challenge from the Fatimids and the Buyids (1056-1060) marked the turning point in this struggle. With this victory the Fatimid tide receded towards Cairo. The Abbasid hold on Baghdad was secured. From then on, the Orthodox vision of Islam, with an accent on the Hanafi and Asharite component, was to dominate Muslim history. This is not a surprise considering that the Turks embraced and championed the Hanafi Fiqh and the Asharite philosophical outlook.

The Fatimid response to their debacle in Baghdad was a deadly clandestine war directed at the leadership of Sunni Islam. The technique was to use assassination as a political tool. The architect of the Assassin Movement was Hassan al Sabbah. Sabbah, in his early years, was a fellow student with Nizam ul Mulk, who rose to become the most celebrated vizier of the Seljuk period. It is related that Sabbah was spurned in his ambitions to obtain a high position in the Seljuk administration. Whether by conviction or spite, he became a Fatimid and with the consent and connivance of the Fatimid Caliphs in Cairo, turned his pointed dagger at the head of the Sunni establishment.

Hassan al Sabbah retreated to the mountains of northern Syria and established his hideout in the remote mountain areas of Mazanderan. There he set up his headquarters and let loose a reign of terror. The structure of his clandestine movement was pyramidal with Hassan at the apex of the pyramid. He carried the title of Shaykh al Jabal. Next in the hierarchy were the dais who were trained to propagate the movement. Below the dais were

the fidayeen, who were indoctrinated as true believers in the gospel of Hassan and acted as agents of their master. It was they who were charged with the responsibility to carry out the assassinations in the far-flung corners of the Islamic dominions. At the bottom of the rung were the rafeeqs, the uninitiated recruits, who were undergoing indoctrination prior to their initiation as fidayees.

The term assassin derives from the Arabic word hashashin (those who consume hashish) because the fidayees used hashish as an intoxicant and while intoxicated, committed their murders. The hashish was mainly imported from India although some was also locally grown. The Hindustani name for hashish is “ganja”, a product similar to marijuana, still widely cultivated and used in the subcontinent. The assassin movement is also called the fidayee movement and its followers are referred to as fidayeen. In Turkish it called the Nisari movement. Both designations imply a willingness to die in the cause of a movement. The Arabs called the fidayeen mulahida (the impious).

In a valley close to his headquarters, Hassan set up a veritable paradise with fruit orchards, gardens and hundreds of beautiful young women. The recruits would be heavily drugged with hashish and then brought into the valley. When they woke up in the company of beautiful women amidst the gardens, the young men thought they were in heaven. Here they received a heavy dose of indoctrination in the secrets of the assassin movement. Total and complete obedience to the commands of the master was required of the initiated. The graduates would be let loose in the vast dominions of the kings and sultans to exact vengeance for the defeat of the Fatimids at the hands of the Seljuks.

The assassins went for the head of Sunni Islam. Hundreds of notables, viziers and generals fell to the assassins' daggers or the poison cup of the fidayeen. Chief among those assassinated was Nizam ul Mulk, the Grand Vizier of the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah. Nizam ul Mulk was undoubtedly one of the ablest administrators produced by the Muslims. His celebrated book, Siasat Nama, written in Farsi, is a masterpiece of the art of administration and politics. It was Nizam ul Mulk who provided a stable anchor to the Seljuk ship. He established universities wherein some of the most capable minds of the age taught. He built hospitals, constructed roads and canals, encouraged agriculture, reinforced the military, rationalized tax

collection and fiscal policies, promoted national and international trade with India and China. The Seljuks prospered and Baghdad once again became the premier city of the world. One of the most notable scholars who taught at the Nizamiya College in Baghdad was Imam al Gazzali who changed the course of Islamic history thorough the sheer force of his pen.

The universities were not just great centers of learning. They were also centers for propaganda for the points of view of their patrons. The political rivalry between the Abbasid and the Fatimid Caliphs was reflected in the respective teachings of the universities in Baghdad and Cairo, much as the capitalist and socialist perspectives were reflected in the social sciences taught in the United States and the Soviet Union until recent times. Al Azhar was established in 969 by the Fatimids not only as a great university but also as a center for Fatimid propaganda. The universities in Baghdad served as a counterpoint to those in Cairo. The Nizamiya College in Baghdad was not only a great center for science, grammar and Fiqh, it was also a counter-propaganda center for Sunni Islam. For instance, in the writings of al Gazzali (d.1111), we find a simultaneous dialectic against the Fatimid position and against the secular challenge of philosophy.

The assassination of Nizam ul Mulk in 1091 was a major blow to the world of Islam. Not only did it deny the Seljuks the services of a first rank administrator, it hastened the centrifugal forces in the vast Seljuk Empire. Others who fell to the fidayeen included the celebrated Emirs Maudud (1127) and Zengi (1146) of Mosul and the Atabek Imaduddin. A hundred years later, Salahuddin Ayyubi himself narrowly escaped the assassin's dagger on two separate occasions. Mohammed

Ghori, conqueror of Delhi, was not so fortunate and died at the hands of an assassin near Kabul in 1206.

The Seljuks attacked the assassins time and again but each time the assassins escaped. It was not until 1251 that the Mongols, under Hulagu Khan, finally conquered the assassin territories and drove them from their hideouts. This was no consolation to the Muslim world because the Mongols were on their way to Baghdad to decimate the very heart of Islamic civilization. Notwithstanding the Mongols, the fidayeen continued to survive in pockets of northern Syria and Iraq until modern times. After the First World War, with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, these areas came under British occupation and received British protection.

After the death of Nizam ul Mulk, Seljuk power dissipated. The empire broke up into small principalities. Quarrels broke out between the princes and the emirs resulting in open warfare. It was into this fossilized Muslim body politic that the Crusaders injected their power in 1096.

Mahmud of Ghazna

History is infinitely elastic. The actions of one person in any age cause ripples that affect the lives of thousands who live downstream. Mahmud of Ghazna is important in Islamic history because his actions set the tone for the interaction between the world of Islam and the world of the Hindus. The tone of that interaction created a bitterness that has been exploited by extremists in the Hindu-Muslim dialectic. No student of the history of India and Pakistan can overlook that fateful year of 1025 when Sultan Mahmud raided the Temple of Somanath in India and hauled away its vast treasures. Conversely, contemporary historians, who have looked at the subcontinent in isolation and have overlooked the global currents within which Mahmud operated, have misunderstood his actions and have unfairly accused him of being an “idol breaker”.

By any historic standard, Mahmud was a towering figure. If one had lived around the year 1000, one would have indeed looked upon him as the giant figure of the era. From Lahore to Baghdad, from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, the flag of Mahmud fluttered unchallenged. Mahmud was the son of Subaktagin, who in turn was the son in law of Alaptagin. Alaptagin, a Mamluke (slave) soldier from a Turkish tribe, served in the Samanid court in Bukhara. As the Samanid dynasty waned and lost its power, Alaptagin moved to the mountains of Afghanistan and established his authority in Ghazna. The Samanids tried to subdue Alaptagin but were unsuccessful. Alaptagin died in 995 and his son-in-law Subaktagin succeeded him. Subaktagin turned his attention to the east, crossed the Indus River and added western Punjab to his dominions. Acknowledging his military successes, the Abbasid Caliph Qadir Billah of Baghdad conferred on Subaktagin the title of Nasir ud Dawla (Defender of the Realm). Legitimacy of rule in Sunni Islam flowed from the Caliph who bestowed his favors on ambitious princes and soldiers through a whole range of titles. Subaktagin was an outstanding soldier and he consolidated his hold on Afghanistan, the Frontier areas and western Punjab.

When Subaktagin died in 997, his sons Mahmud and Ismail contested for power. Mahmud, by far the more gifted of the two, was victorious. When Samanid power disappeared in the year 999, Mahmud moved quickly to annex Khorasan. Persian power disappeared from Central Asia and was replaced by Turkoman power, although Persian influence in the region continued to flourish through the Farsi language. The Caliph in Baghdad recognized Mahmud's legitimacy by conferring upon him the titles of Yamin ud Dawla (The Right Hand of the Realm) and Amin ulMillat (Trustee of the Believers).

Mahmud now turned his attention to India. It is in his interactions with Hindustan that the historic importance of Mahmud crystallizes. To understand Mahmud's raids into India one must revisit the global situation of the Muslims at the time. The Islamic world was divided between the Fatimids in Cairo and the Abbasids in Baghdad, with the Umayyads in Spain claiming their own Caliphate based in Cordoba. The Fatimids controlled North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Arabia. Fatimid sympathizers ruled from Multan (in modern Pakistan) and for a while also from Bukhara. The Fatimids had, in effect, bottled up the Abbasids. The impact of this isolation was profoundly felt in the patterns of trade in West Asia. The Fatimids were successful in diverting the lucrative trade with India and the Far East from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea and from there through Egypt to southern Europe. In addition, the profitable trade in gold and nuts with sub-Saharan Africa also flowed through Fatimid territories.

With no outlet to the Mediterranean from its dominions, Baghdad waned while Cairo prospered. Venetian merchants record the prosperity of Cairo of that period. In addition to this financial squeeze, the Caliphs in Baghdad came under increasing military pressure from surrounding areas. The (Ithna Ashari) Buyids controlled the territories surrounding Baghdad for fifty years. Thus the century between 969 (when the Fatimids conquered Egypt) and 1056 (when the Fatimids were driven out of Baghdad) marks the lowest point for the Sunnis in the internal struggles among Muslims. The financial condition of the Abbasid Caliphs was so bad that they had to auction off their immense treasures to raise cash. Ibn Kathir records at least one such auction, circa 1050.

The Seljuks militarily rescued the Abbasids. The fact that much of the population of North Africa and Asia remained Sunni through centuries of

Fatimid control helped the Turks in this endeavor. To finance their campaigns, the Turkoman rulers of Central Asia increasingly turned their attention to India. Through the ages, India has been a great sink for the world's gold. Indian spices, ivory and manufactured goods were in great demand in the Mediterranean world and beyond. This was paid for in gold, which flowed from the mines in West Africa through the Arabian Sea to the Indian subcontinent. The balance of trade was always in favor of the Indians because spices are grown every year while the supply of gold is limited. India accumulated vast reserves of gold that was sunk into private jewelry and into the temples of the vast subcontinent. Time and again, this accumulated wealth attracted the attention of invaders who raided the subcontinent in search of loot to pay for their military campaigns.

For political centralization to succeed, three conditions must be satisfied. First, there must be a binding force, a cement that holds a people together. This could be a transcendental idea or belief system, or it could be primal cohesiveness based on tribe, nation or race. Second, the power of military offense must have preponderance over the ability to defend. Third, there must be money to finance the process of centralization.

Around the year 1000, two different visions of Islam, that of the Abbasids in Baghdad and that of the Fatimids in Cairo, were competing for primacy. Although the Fatimids held the upper hand militarily for almost a century, neither side had the offensive power to completely overwhelm the other. Both sides needed money to finance their mutually hostile campaigns. The Fatimids raided the coastal cities of

Muslim Spain and Roman Catholic Italy in pursuit of gold. The sultans who supported the Abbasids not only needed cash to finance their operations against the Fatimids, but also to stem the constant military pressure from the Turkish tribes across the Oxus River. For their cash, they turned east.

Sultan Mahmud's raids into India must be understood in this context. Religion, or even dynastic ambitions, had little to do with these raids. The driving force was the need for gold, required to finance the realpolitik of the times. Mahmud raided India 17 times between 1000 and 1030. Peshawar (1001), Bhera (1004), Nagarkot (1007), Thaneshwar (1014), Tarain (1018) and Kanauj (1018) fell to him one after the other. The most famous of his raids carried him deep into Indian territories. In 1025, it took him to

Somanath, the site of a major Shiva temple. The Indians put up a stiff resistance but lost. Mahmud's armies carried away the treasures of the temple.

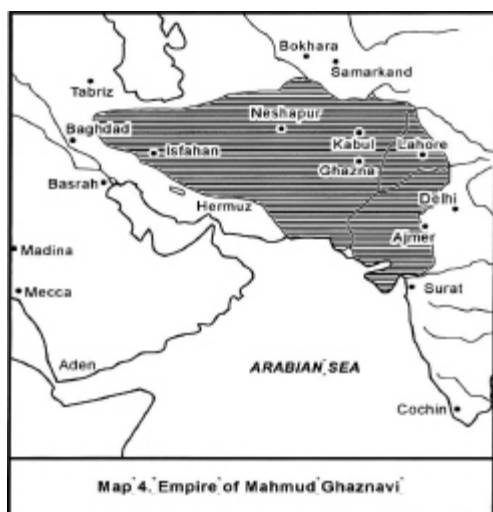
Some historians have used this episode to call Mahmud an idol breaker, or worse yet, a symbol of intolerant Islam towards other religions. The historical facts do not substantiate this charge. Mahmud's raids must be examined in the context of the political situation in western India. The area was politically fossilized, with several rajas from the Chudasama, Abhihara, Paramara, Chalukya and Yadava dynasties competing for territory. Jain and Hindu temples dominated the religious landscape. Some of these, such as the Shiva temple at Somanath were well endowed. The area was rich due to its trade with West Asia. Local rajas often raided the temples in each other's territory, or way-laid the pilgrims on their way to the temples, in search of loot.

Mahmud was not the first one to raid the Indian temples nor did his raids have anything to do with Islam or even his own dynastic ambitions. This is borne out by the fact that he did not stay in India or extend his sultanate to the territories in Gujrat. The raids were purely economic. Romila Thapar, in a research article, Somanatha, Narratives of a History (Islamic Voice, Bangalore, India, October 1999), records several raids of local rajas on each other's temples. The coloring of Mahmud's raids in religious tones was the work of British historians in the 19th century. Specifically, it was the British politicians who rewrote Indian history. In 1843, during a debate in the House of Commons on a proposed invasion of Afghanistan by the British, Lord Ellenborough referred to Mahmud's raids having caused "Hindu trauma". The British, during their invasion, briefly occupied Ghazna, tore off the doorway to Mahmud's tomb claiming it was taken from Somanath and brought it back to Delhi. It was discovered later that the doorway was of Mamluke Egyptian design and had nothing to do with India.

Mahmud consolidated his hold on the Punjab and established Lahore as its capital (1020). In 1004, he defeated and replaced Daud, the Fatimid ruler of Multan. Upon his capital of Ghazna, he bestowed untold riches. He established universities, patronized scholars, built hospitals and instituted a fair and equitable administration. Substantial presents were also sent to Baghdad to obtain from the Caliph the title of Sultan, but this effort was unsuccessful. Mahmud was a patron of Farsi literature and the great poet

Firdowsi graced his court. One of the most celebrated scholars of the times, Al Baruni, accompanied Mahmud in his last campaign to India. It is to this scholar that we owe our knowledge of the peoples of medieval India, their philosophy, beliefs, customs, culture and traditions. Al Baruni wrote Kitab ul Hind, a masterpiece unsurpassed in its unbiased appraisal of Hindu culture, science, mathematics and technology of the time. Al Masudi also translated works from Sanskrit and Greek. His other works include Qanun e Masudi and Chronology of Ancient Nations.

Mahmud's preoccupation with the Indian campaigns weakened the defenses to the north against Turkish incursions. Around the year 1000, one of these tribes, the Oghuz, crossed the Oxus River. Mahmud, cognizant of the potential threat from this quarter, had the Oghuz dispersed in Khorasan with the hope that such dispersal would weaken their cohesiveness. He was incorrect in his assessment. One of the Oghuz tribes soon consolidated its power under their chief Seljuk and within forty years wrested Khorasan and Afghanistan from the successors of Mahmud. They went on to found a dynasty whose influence proved to be pivotal in world history. This was the beginning of the Seljuk dynasty.



Mahmud's exploits disrupted the Indian defenses, exposed their weakness and opened the door to subsequent penetrations from the northwest. Mahmud was a brilliant soldier but he lacked the statesmanship

to build an Indian empire or establish a relationship of trust with the people of Hindustan. This task had to wait another two hundred years until the arrival of Qutbuddin Aibak and the Mamlukes.

The Onset of the Crusades

Civilizations collide when the transcendental values that govern them come into conflict. During the Crusades, the Christian belief that God was immanent in the person of Jesus Christ collided with the Islamic vision that God is transcendent. For the Christian world all that was holy and venerable was embodied in the Cross of the Holy Sepulcher on which Jesus is believed to have been crucified. For the Islamic world, divided though it was between the Orthodox and the Fatimid, the unity of God was beyond compromise. The Christian and the Muslim each considered the other to be an infidel and was willing to kill to impose on the other his own particular brand of transcendence.

The Crusades grew up in the womb of the European Dark Ages. In the fourth century, barbaric Gothic (Germanic) tribes overran Europe. The western Goths controlled Spain and southern France whereas the eastern Goths occupied Italy and territories to the east. Central authority disappeared. Fiefdoms proliferated. There was a brief interlude during the period of Charlemagne (circa 800) and the succeeding Carolingian dynasty when it appeared that Europe might be consolidated under the Holy Roman Empire. However, by the year 850, Charlemagne's successors were at each other's throats for the crown of France, and Europe slipped back into anarchy. The Viking (Swedish) pirates raided the coast of Europe all the way from Denmark to Spain. To the south, resurgent Islamic empires projected their power across the

Mediterranean. Southern France was occupied and from there Muslim armies advanced into Switzerland, occupying the mountain passes around Geneva and levying tolls for travel in and out of Western Europe. The Aghlabids in Algeria captured Sicily and mounted raids into the heart of Italy. In the 10th century, Abdur Rahman III of Spain captured the islands of the western Mediterranean while the Fatimids under Muiz occupied those in the central Mediterranean. The Huns invaded from the east and occupied Hungary, sealing off Western Europe from the east. Europe was thus hemmed in from all sides.

For 200 years, the principal exports of Eastern Europe were fur and slaves. The Vikings, in their relentless raids into Europe, captured slaves who were transported in large numbers down the Volga River and sold to Muslim and Jewish merchants in the bazaars around the Caspian Sea. Under Islam, these slaves were incorporated into the armies of the Sultans and rose to become generals and kings. These were the Mamlukes.

Cut off from effective contacts with the outside world, Europe turned inward. Bereft of a rational stimulus, the European mind turned to the contemplation of the supernatural. The talisman and magic replaced rational enquiry. Relic worship became common. The tombs of saints, or parts of their bodies, became places of pilgrimage. Such visits were supposed to cure diseases and result in miracles. Darkness enveloped the continent. Into this vacuum moved the Church and became the intermediary between the natural forces of this world and the supernatural. The chief product offered by the Church was the talisman, which the ordinary man could use to communicate with the supernatural. Monasteries and churches sprang up everywhere. The Goths were simple-minded folks, highly susceptible to the power of miracles and were converted to Christianity early in the 9th century.

The Church grew rich dispensing indulgences. Forgiveness of sins and rites of birth and death were all done through the Church, which was the intermediary between heaven and earth and had to be mollified before it would pass on the requests from the poor of the earth to the higher ups in heaven. With time, the earnings of the peasants were transferred to the treasury of the Church. The monasteries grew in wealth. And with wealth came the capability to establish and control a police force. Each abbey and each parish had walls, which were like mini-fortresses, stronger and better built than those of the princes and the kings who had lesser means to enforce taxation. Decentralization was at its height. Each abbey and each prince ran its own fiefdom without fear of the power of any centralized force.

Of all the objects that excited the imagination of medieval Europe, the vision of the Cross occupied the highest veneration. Jerusalem, the place where (according to Christian belief) Christ died on the Cross for man's sins and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher that contained the Cross which Jesus carried on his way to crucifixion, were the centers of divine

veneration. A visit to Jerusalem conferred on an individual immeasurable honor.

When Pope Gregory declared a Crusade in 996, he excited the imagination of a continent like nothing had excited it before. Not that the Christian world was ready to take on the vast and dynamic Islamic world. It had as yet no resources to challenge the Muslims. This was still a dream, but a dream that offered an enormous advantage to the Church to keep the imagination of the population riveted on the supernatural and to ensure the continued flow of gratis money into Church coffers.

For 300 years Europe hurled itself at the Islamic world. Wave upon wave of Europeans—French, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Greek—invaded Muslim lands in the name of the Cross, killing Jews and Muslims alike and leaving a bitter trail of death and sorrow. The military engagement of the two civilizations was across a broad front in the Mediterranean extending from Spain to Anatolia. The Crusades started in 996, one hundred years before the First Crusade to Jerusalem. The first battles were fought on the Andalusian Peninsula. The disintegration of the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba in 1032 provided the Christians their opportunity. The Spanish Crusaders waged war on the emirs of Spain, terrorizing the Muslim population and extracting vast tributes. Toledo fell in 1085. This alarmed the ulema, who invited the Murabitun under Yusuf bin Tashfin from across the Straits of Gibraltar to intervene and halt the Christian advance. The focus then shifted to southern Italy and Sicily. The Crusaders attacked and after a long and bitter struggle lasting more than forty years, captured Sicily (1050-1091).

Events in West Asia influenced and hastened the onset of the First Crusade. The first event was the Battle of Manzikert (August 1072) in which the Seljuks decimated Byzantine power in Anatolia. The second was the assassination of Nizam ul Mulk (1091) in Baghdad by the fidayeen. In the Battle of Manzikert, Alp Arslan, the Seljuk Sultan, captured and then set free the Byzantine Emperor Romanus. The capitulation did not sit well with the Greek population. When Romanus returned to Constantinople, he was blinded and overthrown. Civil war broke out among the Greeks and in the melee the Turkish warriors consolidated their hold on Anatolia.

The victory at Manzikert placed the Turks squarely along the pilgrim routes from Europe to Jerusalem. The Turks were less experienced than the Arabs in the political intrigues of the Middle East and some of the Turkish tribes imposed taxes on the Christian pilgrims. This added fuel to the fury created by the defeat at Manzikert. Finally, in 1081, a rich aristocrat Alexius was installed as the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople. Shrewd, politically suave, Alexius kept a close watch on political developments both in the Seljuks territories to the east and among the Latins to the west. Soon, the internal turmoil among the Seljuks provided him with an opportunity to recover lost territories in Anatolia.

The assassination of Nizam ul Mulk in 1091 at the hands of the Fatimid assassins was a disaster for the Seljuks. The political structure among Muslims since the time of Emir Muawiya was pyramidal, with the Caliph or the Imam at the apex and the masses at the bottom. Under the Turks, political and military power was delegated from the caliphs to the sultans. The sultans, in turn, appointed viziers to conduct the affairs of state. When the head of state was wise and competent, there was peace and prosperity in the land. When he was incompetent, turmoil set in. Some of the sultans and viziers were outstanding statesmen, but some were totally incompetent and a few were downright scoundrels.

Nizam ul Mulk, the grand vizier for the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah, was undoubtedly one of the most able administrators in Islamic history. Under his leadership, the Seljuk Empire had prospered. Universities were established. Scholarship and learning were encouraged. Agriculture and trade flourished. Militarily, the Seljuks drove the Byzantines from territories in northern Iraq and Syria that the Byzantines had captured at the height of Fatimid-Sunni military conflicts (950-1050). Driving deeper into Syria, the Turks captured Jerusalem from the Fatimids (1085). Jerusalem had been in Fatimid hands for over a hundred years, since 971. With the assassination of Nizam ul Mulk (1091) and the death of Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah soon thereafter (1092), disintegration of the Seljuk Empire set in. Malik Shah had entrusted the governorship of Syria to his brother Tutush. Upon Malik Shah's death, a battle for succession began. First, there was a tussle between Turkhan Khatun, wife of Malik Shah and Barkyaruk, a son of Malik Shah from another wife. Turkhan's son died soon thereafter. She gave up the struggle and Barkyaruk ascended the throne. He was challenged by his

uncle Tutush but the latter was defeated and killed. Tutush's son Ridwan retained control of Aleppo and as we shall see later, proved to be a traitor in the upcoming struggle against the Crusaders. Another of Tutush's sons Duqaq held Damascus.

The disintegration of Seljuk power provided an opportunity to the Fatimids in Cairo. Egypt was no longer the regional power that it was at the turn of the century under Muiz. The armed forces of Egypt were a composite of Africans, Berbers, Egyptians and Turks and there were serious differences among these competing groups. By 1075, Badr al Jamali, the grand vizier, had brought the situation under control. After Badr al Jamali, his son al Afdal became the grand vizier in Cairo. Taking advantage of the turmoil among the Seljuks, al Afdal advanced into Syria and recaptured Jerusalem in 1095. The Fatimid armies advanced up the coast of Palestine and Lebanon. By 1096, the cities of Gaza, Jaffa, Accra and Tripoli were in Fatimid hands.

So deep was the cleavage between the Fatimids and the Abbasids, that even as the Crusaders advanced through Seljuk territories in 1098, the Fatimids were more interested in forming an alliance with the Crusaders than in resisting the invaders. The Seljuks held the Syrian hinterland as well as Arabia and Iraq. The Armenians held Edessa. Anatolia itself was divided between five different Turkish tribes: the Saltukids, Menguchidis, Danishmends, Seljuks of Rum and the Emirate of Smyrna. The eastern Mediterranean was thus a checkerboard of local lords whose loyalties shifted from day to day. While the Fatimids and the Seljuks were at each others throats trying to decide by the sword who should be the Caliph or the Imam, the Crusader knight rode into Jerusalem, clad in his steel armor and thrust his dagger right into the heart of the Islamic world.

One should not underestimate loot and the promise of booty as a factor in the Crusades. The early Crusaders in Spain had tasted the splendor of Muslim Spain and had extracted large booty from the warring emirs of the peninsula (1032 onwards). The capture of Toledo (1085) with its vast riches had whetted the appetite of the knights and their financial backers in the Church. In medieval Europe, which was steeped in ignorance, money flowed through magic, talisman and relics, of which the Church was the principal beneficiary because it controlled the rites. The monasteries grew enormously rich dispensing the talisman and healing by faith. Sensing

opportunity, the most capable minds joined the monasteries, not only to contemplate the supernatural but also because the monasteries offered the most secure and rich careers. By the 10th century, only the Church had the financial muscle to conjure up or sponsor a large enterprise such as the war on Muslim Spain, or the Crusades to Jerusalem. Pope Urban, a firebrand politician, knew instinctively the value of a march on Jerusalem. The war to liberate Jerusalem was no ordinary war. It was a great march in cooperation with the supernatural for union with the ultimate of the mysteries. It was also potentially a financially rewarding enterprise.

The Crusades were a turning point in the history of both Christian and Islamic civilizations. It was during the Crusades that Europe turned its back on the age of imagination, accepted a materialist framework for its world view, discarded the overbearing influence of the Church and charted a course dictated by self interest and the pursuit of wealth rather than by the dictates of the Church. Europe gained from a transmission of knowledge, military art, engineering technology and Islamic ideas.

With the fall of Toledo and Sicily, the immense knowledge of the Greeks, embellished and enhanced by the Muslims, fell into Christian hands. The wisdom of Islam, its arts and architecture, along with the mathematics of India and the technology of China became accessible to Europe. Schools of translation from Arabic to Latin were established first in Spain and then in France. The logic of Aristotle, the mathematics of Pythagoras, the medical encyclopedia of Ibn Sina, the dialectic of al Ghazzali, the optics of Ibn Ishaq, the algebra of al Khwarizmi, the geometry of Euclid, Indian astronomy and the numerals, the technology for making silk and chinaware, were now available in Paris and Rome as they were available in Bukhara and Baghdad. There was also a tremendous infusion of wealth from the captured cities. Trade routes were opened with Asia and the Europeans cultivated a taste for the finer goods of the East. The prosperous cities of Venice, Florence and Genoa sprang up on the Italian coast.

Civilizations change when the guiding paradigms and governing frameworks that underlie them change. In the march of each civilization, it is possible to identify events that contributed to a major turn in that flow. At other times, the change in the direction of a civilization is much more subtle, like the gentle turn of a river, which leads over a period of time to a shift in direction. In sifting through the events that contribute to such

changes, small heroes—and unknown scoundrels—emerge. These little people make as much of a difference to the affairs of humankind as do the giants who are celebrated in history.

The Crusades gave birth to the archetype of the economic man whose instincts were more oriented towards gold than towards God. When we scan the 300 years during which Europe thrust itself upon West Asia and North Africa, the single most important person among the Crusaders, he who gave a radical turn to the civilization of the Latin West, was not King Richard of England, not even Pope Urban II who preached the First Crusade, but a little old Italian by the name of Dondolo. It was he, who through his sheer mendacity changed the focus of the Crusaders from the Cross of the Holy Sepulcher to the gold of Constantinople. In 1204, during the Fourth Crusade, it was he who showed the knights and barons of Europe that there was indeed a light at the end of the tunnel and that light was not the Cross in Jerusalem, but the accumulated gold and treasures of Byzantium. The seeds of the modern materialist civilization were sown during the Crusades and Dondolo may justly be called one of the founding fathers of that civilization.

The Muslims gained nothing but grief and tears from this encounter. Europe had nothing to offer to the Islamic civilization, which was centuries ahead of Europe in development. However, the Crusades did influence the internal dynamics in the Islamic world. They hastened the termination of the Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo and the consolidation of military power under the Turks. The orthodox (Sunni) vision of Islam won over competing visions. The Muslims lost Sicily, Sardinia and Spain but retained control of Jerusalem. The Mongol invasions (1219-1261) coincided with the later stages of the Crusades.

Faced with a combined onslaught from the Crusaders and the Mongols, Islam turned inwards. Al Gazzali (d.1111) who lived during the time of the first Crusade incorporated the sufi approach within the orthodox framework of Islam. So, when the Crusades were over and Islam emerged from the devastations of the Mongols and expanded into Pakistan, India, Indonesia, southeastern Europe and southwestern Africa, it was a more spiritual and inward looking Islam, an Islam different in its modalities from that of the classical Islamic civilization (665-1258), which was more empirical and extrovert.

The Fall of Jerusalem

The fall of Jerusalem was the price paid by the Muslims for the continued civil wars brought on by competing Sunni and Shi'a visions of Islamic history. The Crusades, declared in 996, were an intercontinental invasion across a front line extending more than 3,000 miles from Spain to Palestine. At the time, the house of Islam was divided into three households. The Turks championed the Abbasids in Baghdad, the Fatimids in Cairo controlled North Africa and Syria and the Spanish Umayyads ruled from Cordoba. Each claimed to be the sole legitimate heir to the Caliphate.

Meanwhile, powerful forces were working both in Europe and Asia, which would determine the turn of events. By the year 1000, the conversion of the Germans to Christianity was complete. The Swedes, who as Viking pirates had ravaged Europe for two hundred years followed suit. With the infusion of German blood, Europe reasserted itself. By 1020, the Muslims who had occupied southern France and the mountain passes in Switzerland were ejected. The island of Sardinia was lost in 1016. In 1072, Palermo fell and by 1091 all of Sicily was lost. The end of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain was an open invitation to the Christians. Spain split up into warring emirates, which fell one after the other to the Christian onslaught. The Visigoth capital city of Toledo fell in the year 1085. In 1087, the old Fatimid capital of Mahdiya (in modern Tunisia) was sacked. In 1090 Malta was captured, providing a base for transportation to Palestine and the Syrian coast.

While Europe consolidated its hold on the northern Mediterranean and struggled to lift itself out of the stupor of the Dark Ages, open warfare raged among Muslims among the three contestants for the Caliphate. Throughout the 11th century, the Fatimids fought pitched battles on two fronts—with the Umayyads in Spain to the west and with the Turks in Syria to the east. In 1057, in a reprisal for an uprising from the Sunni population, the Fatimids razed North Africa, sacking the great learning center of Kairouan. Algeria and Morocco did not recover from this onslaught for two hundred years. In 1077, Hassan al Sabbah, founder of the Assassin movement,

visited Cairo and forged a secret alliance with the Fatimid court. In 1090, he seized control of Alamut in northern Persia and used it as a base to train his band of fidayeen. In 1091, the Assassins murdered Nizam ul Mulk, grand vizier of the Seljuks. Soon thereafter, in 1092, Sultan Malik Shah died. The Fatimids used the ensuing turmoil among the Seljuks to regain control of Jerusalem in 1095, which they had lost to the Turks ten years earlier. Not only were the Muslims divided between Fatimids, Turks and Umayyads, but within each camp, there were fierce feuds for lines of succession.

So, when Rome heard the plea for help from the Byzantine monarch Alexius following the defeat of Manzikert (August 1072), Pope Urban II saw in it a great opportunity not only to heal its rift with the Church of Constantinople which had taken place in 1032 over the issue of icons in the Church, but also to retrieve the Cross and the Holy Sepulcher from the Muslims. In a rousing speech in 1095, he declared the First Crusade. The Pope was a consummate politician and an accomplished orator. He traveled throughout southern France stirring up people to take the oath of the Cross and march on Jerusalem. In return, he promised forgiveness of sins, retribution of debts and a reward of heaven. Hundreds of thousands responded to his call. Counts, knights, farmers, artisans, paupers, all joined in the march. The Crusades were thus more of a mass movement than a war fought by a trained army with a well thought out plan. According to Ibn Khaldun, almost 900,000 people participated in the first Crusade. The sheer mass of this humanity had a decisive impact on the military tactics used in the conflict.

The Crusaders started from two staging areas. One was at Blois near Paris and the other near Cologne in Germany. The southern group marched through Italy, picking up more recruits and was ferried by the Venetians from Italy to the Balkan coast before moving on to Constantinople. The northern group marched down the Danube, ravaging the Hungarian lands as it went. Alexius, the Byzantine Emperor, aware of the frenzy of these mobs, deftly kept both groups out of his capital. From Constantinople, this motley group of warriors, peasants and adventurers advanced into Anatolia.

One of the astonishing facts about the Crusades is the small resistance offered by the Turks and the Arabs to the Crusader advance. The Seljuks had conquered the Anatolian peninsula during the previous century but had not yet consolidated their hold on the hinterland. The entire territory was

lightly defended. They were caught unprepared. The first battle took place at Nicaea (1098), which was located in Seljuk territories. The Turks, whose success on the battlefield depended on their ability for rapid deployment and encircling cavalry, could not maneuver their forces amid the frenzied mobs attacking them. They found themselves in slugging matches with the Europeans wherein they had little advantage. The day belonged to the Crusaders and the Seljuks had to retreat. This defeat encouraged the local Greek and Armenian populations to rise up against the Turkish garrisons in many of the cities. Dorylaeum (near modern Ankara) was lost the following month. An informer betrayed Antioch in northern Syria. From Antioch, the Crusader mobs split into two: one advanced down the Lebanese coast (held by the Fatimids), which offered no resistance and the other moved through eastern Lebanon (held by Turkish emirs) towards Homs, wherein only light resistance was offered.

Even as the invaders advanced through Anatolia and northern Syria, the Fatimids in Cairo were engaged in negotiations with the Crusaders to divide up the conquered Seljuk territories. The Fatimids saw in the death of Malik Shah (1092) and the ensuing contest for succession among the Seljuks a golden opportunity to recover the territories they had lost to the Turks in Syria and Palestine. The Byzantines, who were guiding the Latin Crusaders through the intricate politics of the region, were well aware of the internal squabbles among the Muslims.

The Crusaders sent a delegation to Cairo in 1097 to negotiate terms of an understanding. A memorandum was signed in Antioch in February 1098 according to which the Fatimids resumed control of Tyre and Sidon. But further negotiations broke down in May 1099 over the issue of Jerusalem. The Latins, aware that Cairo would need about two months to raise an army to defend Jerusalem, hastened their march towards that city.

A small garrison of 5,000 troops lightly defended Jerusalem, which the Fatimids had recaptured from the Seljuks in 1095. So confident were the Fatimids about reaching an accord with the Latins that they had made no attempt to reinforce this small contingent. The Crusaders knew of this weakness through information gathered from Christian spies within the city walls. The battle for Jerusalem began on the 10th of June 1099. The Crusaders blew their horns and shouted their slogans in the expectation that the walls of the city would come tumbling down. When this did not

materialize, a direct assault on the citadel began. Initial assaults were unsuccessful because the Latins had little technical knowledge about building engines of war. But help soon arrived from Constantinople and Venice. On the 17th of June, a fleet of six Venetian ships arrived at Jaffa carrying fresh troops, timber and Byzantine engineers experienced in the art of building ramparts, rams and catapults. The infusion of this know-how along with fresh supplies changed the course of the siege. Sturdy ramparts were built and the assault was resumed.

Jerusalem fell on the 15th of July 1099. To quote from Al Kalanisi's contemporary account: "They (the Crusaders) proceeded towards Jerusalem, at the end of Rajab. The people fled in panic before them. They descended first upon Ramallah and captured it after the ripening of the crops. From there, they marched to Jerusalem, the inhabitants of which they engaged and blockaded and having set up the tower against the city they brought it forward to the wall. The news reached them that al Afdal (the vizier of the Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo) was on his way from Egypt with a powerful army to engage in a jihad and destroy them and protect the city. The Crusaders therefore attacked the city with increased vigor and prolonged the battle that day until the daylight faded, then withdrew from it, after promising the inhabitants to renew the attack upon them the following day. The townsfolk descended from the wall at sunset, whereupon the Franks renewed their assault upon it, climbed up the tower and gained a footing on the city wall. The defenders were driven down and the Franks stormed the town and gained possession of it. A large number of the townsfolk took sanctuary at Haram as Sharif, where they were slaughtered. The Jews assembled in the synagogue and the Franks burned it over their heads. The Haram was surrendered to them on the 22nd of Shaaban, but they destroyed the shrines and the tomb of Abraham". According to Ibn Kathir, the Crusaders in Jerusalem alone slaughtered 70,000 Muslims and Jews. This figure is not unreasonable considering the topography of Palestine, which was dotted by a few defended towns and a large number of small villages. When under attack, the villagers sought protection within the walls of the nearest fort swelling the population of the city. The Crusaders set up their headquarters at the Haram and converted the mosque of Al Aqsa into a stable for their horses.

Upon hearing of the fall of Jerusalem, al Afdal, the grand vizier in Cairo hastened to recapture the city. Egypt was no longer the formidable power that it was under Muiz but it was by no means bereft of military prowess. 10,000 infantry and thousands of volunteers augmented an initial contingent of 5,000 cavalry. This force marched up the Sinai Peninsula and camped at Ascalon waiting for further reinforcements by sea and by land. Ascalon, located near modern Gaza, was the last major stronghold of the Fatimids before Jerusalem. News of the movement of this contingent arrived in the Latin camp, whereupon the Crusaders moved south to meet the Egyptians. Al Afdal's intelligence failed him at this crucial juncture. On the 12th of August 1099, Al Afdal's camp was ambushed. The formidable Egyptian cavalry did not have a chance. The infantry was routed. Al Afdal managed to escape with a few of his bodyguards.

Soon after the fall of Jerusalem, quarrels broke out among the warring Latins as to who should govern the city. The Church, which had masterminded the entire adventure, intervened at crucial moments, ensuring that disagreements would not jeopardize the overall mission.

The Crusaders were not accustomed to a centralized administration. They imposed on the conquered territories the only governing system they knew, namely feudalism and installed Baldwin as the King of Jerusalem.

Salahuddin (Saladin) and the Battle of Hittin

A divided Islamic world offered feeble resistance to the Crusaders who consolidated their hold on the eastern Mediterranean and imposed their fiefdoms on the region. The Seljuks, preoccupied with defending their eastern flank against the Afghan Ghaznavids, had thinned out their western defenses. The pagan Turkish tribes across the Amu Darya on the northeastern frontiers were a constant menace. The advancing Crusaders received valuable assistance from the local Orthodox and Armenian communities. The Venetians provided transportation. Faced with a determined offensive, Tripoli surrendered in 1109. Beirut fell in 1110. Aleppo was besieged in 1111. Tyre succumbed in 1124. The warring Muslim parties did not take the Crusader invasion seriously at this stage. They considered the Christians to be just another group in the motley group of emirs, prelates and religious factions jostling for power in West Asia.

Meanwhile, the internal situation in Egypt went from bad to worse. Power had long ago slipped from the Fatimid Caliphs. The viziers had become the real power brokers. Notwithstanding the rout of the Egyptian army by the Crusaders and the loss of Jerusalem, al Afdal, the grand vizier was more interested in playing politics in Cairo than in recovering the lost territories. When the old Caliph Musta Ali died in 1101, al Afdal installed the Caliph's infant son Abu Ali on the throne and became the de-facto ruler of Egypt. But this did not sit well with Abu Ali. When he grew up, he had al Afdal murdered. In turn, Abu Ali himself was assassinated in 1121.

Anarchy took over Egypt. Abu Ali left no male heirs. His cousin Abul Maimun became the Caliph. But he was deposed by his own vizier, Ahmed and put in prison. Not to be outmaneuvered, Abul Maimun plotted from his prison cell and had Ahmed murdered. After Abul Maimun, his son Abu Mansur succeeded him. Abu Mansur was more interested in wine and women than in the affairs of state. His vizier Ibn Salar ran the

administration but his own stepson Abbas murdered him and became the vizier.

The Fatimid Caliphs in Cairo had no power and became pawns in the hands of the viziers. And the institution of vizier was usurped by anyone who was ruthless and powerful. In 1154, Nasr, the son of vizier Abbas, assassinated Caliph Abu Mansur. The sisters of Abu Mansur discovered this act of murder and appealed to Ruzzik, the governor of Upper Egypt for help in punishing Nasr. They also appealed to the Franks in Palestine. Nasr ran for his life but was captured by the Franks and sent back to Cairo where he was nailed to a cross.

Egypt was like a ripe plum ready to be plucked. The Crusaders knew that control of Egypt would deal a devastating blow to the Islamic world. The local Maronite and Armenian communities would welcome them. From Egypt they could open land communications with the Christian communities in Ethiopia and command the trade routes to India. Several invasions of Egypt were launched. In 1118, the Crusaders landed in Damietta, ravaged that city and advanced towards Cairo. The Egyptians repelled the invaders but the resources consumed in defending their home turf prevented them from defending Palestine. The last Fatimid stronghold in Palestine, Ascalon, fell in 1153.

With Egypt in disarray and the Seljuks under increasing pressure from the Ghaznavids and the Turkish Kara Khitai tribes, Crusader rule in Jerusalem went unchallenged for almost a century. The task of defending against European military invasions had to be organized from northern Iraq and eastern Anatolia. Today, these are the Kurdish provinces of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Persia. Maudud, a Seljuk officer from Mosul, was the first to take up the challenge. In 1113, he defeated

King Baldwin of Jerusalem in a series of skirmishes. But Fatimid assassins murdered Maudud in 1127. Another Turkish officer, Zengi, continued Maudud's work. Zengi was a first rate soldier, a man of righteousness, fairness and piety. He ruled with firm justice, making no distinction between a Turk and a non-Turk. In 1144, Zengi captured the city of Edessa. This provoked a new Crusade in which Emperor Conrad of Germany and Bernard of France took part. Zengi inflicted a crushing defeat on the invaders, forcing the Germans and the Franks to withdraw. But two events took place that delayed the task of expelling the Franks from

Jerusalem. In 1141, the Seljuks suffered a major defeat from the pagan Turkoman Kara Khitai at the banks of the Amu Darya River. In 1146, the Fatimid assassins murdered Zengi himself.

His son Nuruddin pursued Zengi's work with even greater vigor. A man of extraordinary ability, Nuruddin organized a systematic campaign to expel the Crusaders from West Asia. Nuruddin was a man of piety, bereft of prejudice, of noble disposition. The unsettled military conditions provided ample opportunities for capable persons and non-Turkish soldiers rose rapidly through the army. Among them were two officers, Ayyub and Shirkuh, the uncle of Salahuddin. Systematically, Nuruddin's officers brought all of northern Iraq, eastern Syria and eastern Anatolia under their control. Damascus was added in 1154. With the resources of these vast territories behind him, Nuruddin was ready to challenge the Crusaders in Palestine and fight for control of

Egypt.

The key to Palestine lay in Egypt. As long as the Fatimids ruled Egypt, coordinated military action against the Crusader kingdoms was not possible. The race to Egypt was of great immediacy. In 1163, there were two rival viziers in Cairo. One of them invited the Franks to intervene in Egypt. The other appealed to Nuruddin. Nuruddin promptly dispatched Shirkuh to Cairo. In 1165 both the Seljuks and the Crusaders appeared in Egypt but neither was able to establish a base. Two years later Shirkuh returned to Egypt with his nephew Salahuddin. This time he was successful in establishing his authority in the Nile Delta. Mustadi, the last Fatimid Caliph was forced to appoint

Shirkuh as his vizier. In 1169, Shirkuh died and his nephew Salahuddin was appointed in his place.

Salahuddin was the man of the hour. He fought off repeated attacks by the Crusaders on Egypt, put down revolts within the army and gave Egypt respite from incessant civil war. Despite three centuries of Fatimid rule, the Egyptian population had remained Sunni, following the Sunnah schools of Fiqh. In 1171, Salahuddin abolished the Fatimid Caliphate. The name of the Abbasid Caliph was inserted in the khutba. So peaceful was this momentous revolution that the Fatimid Caliph Mustadi did not even know of this change and quietly died a few weeks later.

The Fatimids, once so powerful that they controlled more than half of the Islamic world including Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem, passed into history. The Sunni vision of history, championed by the Turks, triumphed. With the disappearance of the Fatimid schism, a united orthodox Islam threw down the gauntlet to the invading Crusaders.

Historians often argue whether it is man that influences history or it is his circumstance and the environment that shape the course of events. This argument misses the point. There is an organic relationship between the actions of men and women and the circumstances under which they operate. Those who chisel out the edifice of history do so with their power, bending the flow of events to their will and leave behind a blazing trail for others to follow and sort out. But they succeed because circumstances are in their favor. Ultimately, the outcome of historical events is a moment of Divine Grace. It is not obvious, a priori, what the outcome of a critical historical moment will be.

Salahuddin, perhaps the most celebrated of Muslim soldiers after Ali ibn Abu Talib, was a man who molded history with his iron will. His accomplishment in evicting the Crusaders from Palestine and Syria are well known. What is less well known is his achievement in welding a monolithic Islamic body politic, free of internal fissures, which offered the Muslims, for a brief generation, the opportunity to dominate global events. It was the generation of Salahuddin that not only recaptured Jerusalem, but also laid the foundation of an Islamic Empire in

India and briefly contained the Crusader advance in Spain and North Africa.

With the dissolution of the Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo and the consolidation of Salahuddin's hold on Syria and Egypt, the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean tilted in favor of the Muslims. Arabia, Yemen as well as northern Iraq and eastern Anatolia were also added to Salahuddin's domains. It was only a matter of time before the weight of this power was brought on the Crusaders. The cause for hostilities was provided by one of the Latin chiefs, Renaud de Chatellon. Renaud was the king of the coastal cities in Palestine and Lebanon. To quote the well-known historian Bahauddin: "This accursed Renaud was a great infidel and a very strong man. On one occasion, when there was a truce between the Muslims and the Franks, he treacherously attacked and carried off a caravan from

Egypt that passed through his territory. He seized these people, put them to torture, threw them into pits and imprisoned some in dungeons. When the prisoners objected and pointed out that there was a truce between the two peoples, he remonstrated: "Ask your Muhammed to deliver you". Salahuddin, when he heard these words, vowed to slay the infidel with his own hands."

Sybilla, daughter of the previous king Amaury and her husband Guy de Lusignan ruled the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem at the time. Salahuddin demanded retribution for the pillage of the caravan from Guy de Lusignan. The latter refused. Salahuddin sent his son Al Afdal to hunt down Renaud. His capital Karak was besieged. The Franks, upon hearing of this siege, united and advanced to meet Al Afdal. In turn, Salahuddin moved to assist his son. The two armies met on the banks of Lake Tiberias, near Hittin, on the fourth of July 1187. Salahuddin positioned himself between the Crusaders and the lake, denying them access to water. The Franks charged. By a skillful maneuver, Salahuddin's forces enveloped the Franks and destroyed them. Most of their leaders were either captured or killed. Among those taken prisoner were Guy de Lusignan, King of Jerusalem and Renaud, the rogue king of the coastal cities who had caused the hostilities. Included among the escaped leaders were Raymond of Tripoli and Hugh of Tiberias. Salahuddin treated Guy de Lusignan with courtesy but had Renaud beheaded.

The retreating Franks moved towards Tripoli, but Salahuddin would offer them no respite. Tripoli was taken by storm. Acre was next. Nablus, Jericho, Ramallah, Jaffa and Beirut opened their gates to the Sultan. Only Tripoli and Tyre remained occupied by the Franks. Salahuddin now turned his attention to Jerusalem, known as Al Quds to Muslims. The city was well defended by 60,000 Crusader soldiers. The Sultan had no desire to cause bloodshed and offered them a chance for peaceful surrender in return for freedom of passage and access to the holy sites. The offer was rejected. The Sultan ordered the city besieged. The defenders, bereft of support from the coastline, surrendered (1187).

Salahuddin, in his magnanimity, made the most generous terms of surrender to the enemy. The Franks who wanted to reside in Palestine would be allowed to do so, as free men and women. Those who wanted to leave would be allowed to depart with their households and their belongings

under full protection of the Sultan. The (Eastern Orthodox) Greeks and the Armenians were permitted to stay on with full rights of citizenship. When Sybilla, Queen of Jerusalem, was leaving the city, the Sultan was so moved by the hardship of her entourage that he ordered the imprisoned husbands and sons of the wailing women to be set free so that they might accompany their families. In many instances, the Sultan and his brother paid the ransom to free the prisoners. History has seldom seen such a contrast between the chivalry of a conquering hero like Salahuddin who treated his vanquished foes with generosity and compassion and the savage butchery of the Crusaders when they took Jerusalem in 1099.

The fall of Jerusalem sent Europe into a frenzy. Pope Clement III called for a new Crusade. The Latin world was up in arms. Those taking the Cross included Richard, King of England; Barbarosa, King of Germany; and Augustus, King of France. The military situation in Syria favored Salahuddin on the ground and the Crusaders at sea. Salahuddin sought an alliance with Yaqub al Mansur of the Maghrib to blockade the western Mediterranean. Yaqub had his hands full with the Crusaders in his own backyard. The monarch of the Maghrib did not appreciate the global scope of the Latin invasions. The alliance did not materialize and the Crusaders were free to move men and material across the sea.

The Third Crusade (1188-1191) was the most bitterly fought of all the Crusades in Palestine. The European armies moved by sea and made Tyre their principal staging port. Acre was the first major point of resistance in their advance on Jerusalem. The three European monarchs laid siege to the city while Salahuddin moved to relieve the city. A long standoff ensued, lasting over two years, with charges and countercharges. On many occasions, the Muslim armies broke through and brought relief to the city. But the Crusaders, with their sea-lanes open, were re-supplied and the siege resumed.

What followed was an epic armed struggle between the cross and the crescent. Salahuddin's armies were spread thin all across the Syrian coast and the hinterland to guard against additional Crusader attacks by land. Barbarosa, Emperor of Germany, advanced through Anatolia. There was only token resistance from the Turks. Barbarosa brushed this resistance aside, only to drown in the River Saraf on his way. Upon his death, the German armies broke up and played only a minor part in the Third Crusade.

The defenders in Acre offered valiant resistance, but after a long siege, exhausted and spent, surrendered in 1191. The victorious Crusaders went on a rampage and violating the terms of surrender, butchered anyone who had survived the siege. King Richard is himself reported to have slain the garrison after it had laid down its arms. The Crusaders rested a while in Acre and then marched down the coast towards Jerusalem. Salahuddin marched alongside them, keeping a close watch on the invader armies. The 150 mile long route was marked by many sharp engagements. When the Crusaders approached Ascalon, Salahuddin, realizing that the city was impossible to defend, evacuated the town and had it razed to the ground.

A stalemate developed with Salahuddin guarding his supply routes by land while the Crusaders controlled the sea. Richard of England finally realized that he was facing a resolute man of steel and made an overture for peace. Meetings took place between Richard and Saifuddin, brother of Salahuddin. At first, Richard demanded the return of Jerusalem and all the territories that had been liberated since the Battle of Hittin. The demands were unacceptable and they were refused.

It was at this juncture that Richard made his historic proposals to bring peace to Jerusalem. According to its terms, Richard's sister would marry Salahuddin's brother Saifuddin. The Crusaders would give the coast as dowry to the bride. Salahuddin would give Jerusalem to his brother. The bride and groom would rule the kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital, uniting the two faiths in a family bond. Salahuddin welcomed these proposals. But the priests and many among the Franks were opposed. Threats were made for the ex-communication of King Richard. Tired and disgusted with the narrow-mindedness of his comrades, Richard longed to return home. Finally, a peace treaty was concluded between Richard and Salahuddin. Under its terms, Jerusalem would remain under the Sultan but would be open to pilgrims of all faiths. Freedom of worship would be guaranteed. The Franks would retain possession of a strip of land along the coast extending from Jaffa to Tyre but the bulk of Syria and Palestine would remain in Muslim hands.

The Third Crusade marshaled all the energies of Europe on a single enterprise, namely, the capture of Jerusalem. But the full might of Europe and the combined resources of its monarchs, could claim but one insignificant fortress, Acre. Salahuddin returned to Damascus victorious and

hailed by his compatriots as a symbol of valor and chivalry. He had achieved what few before him had achieved, namely a united ummah facing a common foe. He spent the remainder of his days in prayer and charity, building schools, hospitals and establishing a just administration in his domains. This prince of warriors passed away on the fourth of March 1193 and was buried in Damascus.

The Conquest of Delhi

For a brief moment, towards the end of the 12th century, the Muslim world was politically united under one caliph ruling from Baghdad. This political unity, rare in Islamic history, projected itself on the military plane. In West Asia, the Crusaders were ejected from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. Salahuddin recaptured Jerusalem in 1187. Four years later, in 1191, Muhammed Ghorî of Ghazna crossed the Indus, defeated Prithvi Raj Chauhan of Delhi and Ajmer and conquered Hindustan. Five years after this momentous conquest, in 1196, the Al Muhaddith Yaqub al Mansur, won a decisive victory against the Crusaders at the Battle of Alarcos. For about thirty years, Muslim power was unchallenged on the globe.

Five years after the Battle of Hittin (1186) in which Salahuddin routed the Crusaders, another battle of equal historical importance was fought at Tarain on the plains of the Punjab between Muhammed Ghorî of Ghazna and Prithvi Raj Chauhan of Delhi. The outcome of this battle paved the way for the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. It was the first gambit in the creation of an Islamic community in the subcontinent which today numbers 400 million and is by far the largest Islamic community in the world.

The vast Indian subcontinent of 1192 was a divided land rent asunder by the mutual passions and jealousies of the ruling Rajput princes. Prithvi Raj, a dashing prince of the Chauhan dynasty, who had an equal penchant for love and war, ruled Delhi and Ajmer. Further to the east, Jai Chand, the Raja of Kanauj, was at odds with Prithvi because Jai Chand's daughter had married Prithvi against her father's wishes. This violated the Rajput code of honor and Jai Chand had vowed to get even with his son-in-law. Rival princes held Benares, Ujjain, Bundelkhand, Bengal, Malwa and Gujrat. The Rashtrakutas were in power in central India. The Chola, Pandya and Chera kingdoms prospered in southern India.

The storms that become manifest as critical moments in history are first played out in the minds of men and women. It is in the minds—and hearts and souls—of humans that lust and passion, love and hatred, power and

prejudice, greed and benevolence are first sorted out. When these conflicts are projected on the world plane, facts are created and the canvas of history rolls forward offering new possibilities for human action. Thus it was that the rivalry between Prithvi Raj and Jai Chand, born out of a love affair between Prithvi Raj and Jai Chand's daughter, played a critical role in the conquest of Delhi by the Afghans.

For three hundred years after the conquest of Sindh, Mansura and Multan by Muhammed bin Qasim (711), the frontier between the Caliphate in Baghdad and the Rajput strongholds in India remained more or less stationary. Mahmud's raids (1000-1026) shattered this equilibrium and showed up the weakness in the Indian defenses. The majestic but slow moving elephants in the Rajput armies were no match for the swift enveloping movements of the horsemen from Central Asia. After Mahmud, there were no major incursions into the subcontinent from the northwest and the Rajputs were able to reconsolidate their hold on the territories of central Punjab.

The status quo was changed by the Ghoris, a resilient tribe of Afghan-Turkomans who had challenged the Ghaznavids from the mountains of Ghor, located between Kabul and Herat. In 1173, Giasuddin Ghorī established himself as an independent ruler in Ghor and after capturing Ghazna itself, appointed his brother Moeezuddin Muhammed Ghorī as his lieutenant in the eastern provinces. Tough, resilient, resourceful and endowed in abundance with leadership qualities, Muhammed Ghorī cast his eyes east towards Hindustan. India was too rich a prize for any enterprising prince to disregard. But first he had to deal with the emirs and the Muslim princes of Afghanistan and the Punjab. By 1177, he had added Multan, Uch, Dera Ismail

Khan and portions of Sindh to the Ghorid dominions. In 1178 he led a raid on Patan in Gujrat but suffered a setback. Turning his attention northwards, he captured Peshawar (1179), Sialkot (1185) and Lahore (1186). Initial forays eastward towards Delhi were not fruitful and on more than one occasion Muhammed Ghorī was cornered by the Rajputs but escaped after paying a ransom. However, an opportunity presented itself in 1190 when he successfully attacked and took the fort of Bhatinda. This skirmish led to a series of military actions with fateful consequences for the subcontinent.

The Raja of Bhatinda was an ally of Prithvi Raj Chauhan of Delhi. Treaty obligations compelled Prithvi to advance from Delhi to meet the Afghans. Muhammed Ghorī was returning to Kabul when news reached him of the Rajput advance. He turned around to defend Bhatinda, even though some of his cavalry had already preceded him to Kabul. The two armies met at Tarain in 1191. Ghorī fought bravely but the charge of the Indian elephants broke through the Afghan defenses. Ghorī was injured and barely escaped with his life. Undaunted, Ghorī regrouped in Kabul and returned the following year. This time Prithvi was supported by a large number of Rajput princes. However, Jai Chand, Raja of Kanauj, who had vowed to avenge his daughter's honor, supported Muhammed Ghorī. The armies met at the Second Battle of Tarain fought in 1192. The Indian forces charged, spearheaded by the elephant corps, but this time the Afghans feigned a retreat. Then, turning around in a rapid enveloping movement, trapped the Indian center. The Rajputs dispersed. Prithvi Raj was taken prisoner and later died in captivity.

The victory at Tarain made Muhammed Ghorī the master of Hindustan. After capturing Delhi, Ajmer and surrounding territories, he nominated his Mamluke lieutenant Qutbuddin Aibak as his deputy and returned to Ghazna. Meanwhile, his generals fanned out across the Gangetic plains and in swift movements reminiscent of the advance of Tariq and Musa in Spain five hundred years earlier, captured Bihar (1199) and Bengal (1202). Jai Chand, Raja of Kanauj, who had hitherto supported Muhammed Ghorī, was upset with the Muslim advance beyond his territories. He resisted but was defeated in a pitched battle in 1193. By 1205, all of the Indo-Gangetic plains were under Ghurid control.

Giasuddin Ghorī died in 1202 and Muhammed Ghorī ascended the throne of Ghazna. Much of the time of the new Sultan was occupied with containing the Turkish invasions from the north. In 1205, he suffered a defeat at the hands of the Kara Khitai Turkish tribe. Rumor spread that Muhammed Ghorī was killed in this battle. Sensing an opportunity, the Khokars of the Punjab revolted under the leadership of a local raja. The uprising was so well organized that Punjab was cut off from both Ghazna and Delhi. The revolt was crushed only when a pincer movement was organized wherein Muhammed Ghorī descended from the north while Qutbuddin Aibak advanced from Delhi to the south. While returning to

Kabul after this successful engagement, Ghorī was assassinated by a Fatimid assassin in 1206.

With the conquest of Delhi, the center of gravity of the Islamic world began to shift to the east, a process accelerated by the Mongol invasions (1219-1261) and the resulting destruction of Central Asia and Persia. It paved the way for successive Muslim dynasties in India and Pakistan, culminating with the magnificent Moghuls (1526-1707). The people of Hindustan entered the fold of a global Islamic community taking their place alongside the Arabs, Persians, Turks and Africans. In time, this would be augmented with the great Islamic communities of Indonesia and Malaysia. Islam took root in the subcontinent, giving birth to a flourishing and unique Indian Muslim civilization in a Hindu matrix. Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Lucknow and Hyderabad flourished as centers of Islamic learning, art and culture, rivaling and surpassing Samarqand, Damascus and Kairouan. In the twentieth century, it paved the way for the birth of the modern nations of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The Fourth Crusade— Sack of Constantinople

Civilizations change when the paradigms that govern them change. Humans relate to themselves and to each other through transcendental values firmly imbedded in basic frameworks. These values define how a society looks upon itself, how it interacts with other societies and its place in history. For instance, in the Middle Ages, most people believed that the earth was flat. The paradigm of a flat earth defined the limits of geography, politics and history. When that paradigm changed and it was universally accepted that the earth was round, it fundamentally altered the way civilizations related to each other. America was discovered, the oceans were conquered, the patterns of trade changed, old empires fell and new ones emerged.

In the vast panorama of history, certain milestones stand out when a civilization fundamentally and noticeably altered its paradigm and charted its course in a different direction. The sack of Constantinople in 1204 by the Crusaders was one such milestone. Indeed, it was the year that the Latin West fundamentally changed its orientation. Prior to the year 1204, the focus of the Crusades was the Cross and the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. After that date, it was the glitter of gold. Before 1204, the energy of Europe expressed itself through imagination and monasticism. The continent was steeped in poverty and ignorance. Trade was at a standstill. The amulet and the talisman, magic and sorcery were the mechanisms for communication with the supernatural.

The Church was the primary beneficiary of this ignorance because it was the one institution that claimed the privilege of dispensing the amulet and the talisman.

This changed after the Latins captured Constantinople in 1204, rampaged through its streets, destroyed its relics, danced on the altars of its churches and looted its immense wealth. The Crusaders were a motley group of

French barons, German peasants, Italian merchants and Latin priests. The gold and silver that was carried off from the ancient Byzantine capital provided momentum for the prosperity of the Italian city-states of Venice, Genoa and Florence. Italy was launched on its way to the Renaissance that reached its zenith in the 15th and 16th centuries. Europe was transformed. After 1204, the energy of Europe found its expression primarily through economics, trade and self-interest. The civilization that produced the Renaissance and later the Reformation and the Enlightenment was secular and bore little resemblance to the civilization that had produced the First Crusade in 1096. There were more “Crusades” after the Crusade of 1204, but these were either expressions of an economic thrust cloaked in religious terminology or a reaction to Turkish marches into southeastern Europe.

The prelude to the historic events of 1204 was the declaration of a Crusade by Pope Innocent III in 1199. The loss of Jerusalem to Salahuddin was unpalatable to the Latin Church, which was reeling from further defeats at the hands of the Al Muhaddithin in Spain. The initial response to this call to arms was lukewarm. Europe was a divided house towards the end of the 12th century. Count Baldwin challenged the French throne. Germany had two claimants to the throne, Philip of Swabia and Otto of Brunswick. Venice had lost its hold on the western Adriatic. In Spain, the Muslims had driven the Crusaders back towards the borders of France. The Crusader foothold in Palestine and Lebanon was at the mercy of the powerful Ayyubids. By declaring a Crusade, Pope Innocent sought to direct the energies of the warring Europeans towards a transcendental goal and collect funds for the Church at the same time.

Europe was broke and could not muster the energy for a new war against a resurgent Islam. To raise funds, the Pope levied a tax on all believers. This was not a popular move and it generated little enthusiasm for another march on Palestine. The situation changed and a spark for the Crusade was lit, when two young barons, Thibaut and Louis, “took the Cross” (joined the Crusade) at the tournament of Ecrysur-Aisne in northern France in 1199. These two barons, grandsons of Louis VII, enjoyed enormous prestige and soon many other barons and knights from France also enlisted. At the Council of Compeigne in 1200, it was decided that the warriors would depart for Palestine by sea. Neither the potentates nor the church had a fleet.

Therefore, they sought the help of Venice, the only city-state on the Italian coast, which had the resources to provide this help.

Envoys were sent to Venice. The Venetians were a breed different from the Crusaders from northern Europe. They were merchants, motivated by profit, even when the goal was a superordinate one, such as the conquest of Jerusalem. They had maintained a brisk trade with Egypt and Syria throughout the 10th and 11th centuries. Venice was ruled by an elected council, the doge and its head in the year 1201 was Enrico Dondolo. Savvy, politically astute, eloquent, ruthless and unscrupulous beyond compare, Dondolo was an old man, between eighty and ninety five years of age. He personified the archetype of a business culture, which had survived and prospered for centuries through piracy and trade in the eastern Mediterranean. Dondolo drove a hard bargain with the Crusader barons. In return for ferrying 20,000 foot soldiers and 4,500 knights and their horses, he demanded a payment of 85,000 silver marks, a demand that was agreed to by the Pope. A contract was signed and the warriors began to assemble in Venice.

But all the silver plates and tablespoons of the knights and barons of Europe could produce only 29,000 silver marks. Dondolo saw his golden opportunity and moved for the kill. He had built and delivered four hundred ships as per the contract. As compensation for his already completed efforts, Dondolo proposed that the Crusaders assist him in capturing the city of Zara located on the eastern Adriatic (today's Croatia). Zara had long been coveted by Venice as a harbor for the supply of much needed hardwood from Croatia and Bosnia. In 1201,

Zara was a Christian city under the protection of the Hungarian monarch, a fellow Christian and a Crusader under the jurisdiction of the Pope. The Pope was furious at the suggestion and objected to this enterprise. But his bishops and prelates in charge of the Crusade agreed to go along with Dondolo, "in the interest of a higher cause", so that money could be raised by plunder of Zara and the Crusade could continue on to Jerusalem. Zara was stormed, captured and looted. The Church made some noises but not a single silver candlestick stolen from Zara was returned, either by the invading Venetians or by the representatives of the Pope who accompanied them.

At this time, an historic opportunity presented itself to the shrewd Dondolo who had the instincts of a predator. In 1185, the Byzantine Emperor Isaac had been dethroned by his own brother Alexius, blinded and locked up in a dungeon. Isaac's son, also named Alexius, escaped to Germany where his sister Irene was the queen and then on to Rome to appeal to the Pope for help against his uncle. The Pope sensed at once an opportunity to bring the Church of Constantinople under the Church of Rome. The prospect of opening a land route to Palestine through Constantinople ruled by a pliant king did not escape him either. With the acquiescence of the Pope, Dondolo's fleet proceeded towards Constantinople, accompanied by 20,000 French, Italian and German Crusaders, who were motivated more by lust and the power of wealth than by the love of Christ.

The European archetype had changed, from a man of imagination titillated by magic and the talisman to a man of this world motivated by the promise of plunder. The minds of men were now fired by the glitter of gold, not the vision of the cross. The defenses of Constantinople were formidable. The walls of its ramparts were the tallest in all of Europe. The entrance to the Golden Horne was blocked by a chain of steel anchored to piers on either side of the narrow straits. Dondolo knew the city and its defenses well, having served as the Venetian ambassador there for a long time. He knew that the weakest defenses were along the Golden Horne. A Venetian ship was loaded with steel shears and ordered to cut the steel chain. The city was assaulted by sea, led by the old man himself and taken by storm on April 12, 1204.

Young Alexius was installed on the throne, under the tutelage of Rome and a demand for an exorbitant sum of 400,000 silver marks was placed before him. Alexius could not raise this sum and late that year attempted to expel the invaders. He was defeated and the city was sacked.

The rampage of the city was beyond description. Men were killed by the thousands and women raped. The treasures of the Byzantine court, accumulated over a thousand years, were looted. The horses of the Crusaders rode into the churches, defiling the hallowed grounds with their refuse. The Church of Santa Sophia became a dancing hall. At the height of the carnage, a prostitute stood on the seat of the Patriarch and sang a lewd song, entertaining the demented invaders. The glory of Byzantium was

trampled under the feet of the Latin mules. Treasures of the Byzantine Empire traveled west, to Venice and Rome. Upon the ashes of Byzantium rose the pirate states of eastern Italy. Economic consolidation had begun, cemented by the gold of Constantinople. In due course, this would give birth to the Renaissance. A civilization died and a new civilization was born, destined to dominate the globe. History had taken a turn and the world would not be the same again.

Origins of the Ottoman Empire

The origins of the Ottoman Empire are to be found in a combination of Turkish asabiyah and the Islamic spirit of ghazza (meaning, struggle in the cause of God). Asabiyah, a term used by Ibn Khaldun to denote tribal cohesion, is the force that holds together tribes through bonds of blood, a characteristic found in abundance among peoples of the desert and the nomads of the steppes. The Turks were a people who lived in the upper reaches of Central Asia, on the borders between Sinkiang, Mongolia and Kazakhstan and possessed the qualities of asabiyah in abundance. They were, like their Mongol cousins, a people who roamed the grasslands on their horses, setting down their tents just long enough for rest and recuperation. They were known for their fierce loyalty to the clan and for their bravery and horsemanship.

In the 8th century, as Islam spread towards the Amu Darya, the Turks came into contact with its universal precepts and embraced the new faith. Many found service in the armed forces of the Abbasid Empire. Using their innate qualities of leadership, some rose through the ranks, occupied important positions in the army and by the middle of the 9th century, became the kingmakers in Baghdad. By the end of the 9th century, they had replaced the Caliphate in Baghdad with the Sultanate as the de-facto political power. The rise of the Seljuks in the 11th century marked a high point in Turkish power. The Seljuk victory over the Byzantines in August 1071 was a turning point in world history and opened Anatolia to Turkish penetration. Until the advent of Hulagu Khan and the fall of Baghdad (1258), Turkish pressure on Byzantine holdings in Anatolia was continuous and forceful. There was a pause during the Mongol eruptions. Hulagu captured the upper reaches of the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates located in eastern Anatolia and forced the Turks further west. Most of Anatolia accepted Mongol dominance and the Mongol lords appointed their own satraps to rule over the local principalities.

But the Turks were not a people to accept Mongol overlordship for long. After the Battle of Ayn Jalut (1261), Mongol power waned, while Turkish power gathered momentum. As early as the 11th century, the Turks were organized into effective brigades, each one led by a bey. The primary purpose of these brigades was to march against the Byzantine territories. It is here that the Islamic spirit of ghazza came into play.

Without Islam, the Turks were a roving band of nomads, not unlike the nomads of bygone eras, who were pushing against the frontiers of settled civilizations. With Islam, they became not just conquerors but founders of a global empire and a global civilization. The narrow asabiyah of tribe and race gave way to the global vision of Islam. Those who took part in ghazza were called ghazis. The term ghazi carries a connotation of valor, strength, humility, selflessness, charity, steadfastness, struggle and chivalry to this day in languages spoken by Muslims worldwide. There were several groups of ghazis and a person could move freely from one group to another.

It was these ghazis who cemented Turkish power in West Asia and projected it into the very heart of Europe. Uthman Ghazi emerged from among these ghazis as the bey (Turkish, meaning authority, leader) of the western marches. The house of Uthman is called Uthmanali and the empire founded by him is referred to as the Uthmania or Ottoman Empire. It is said that Uthmanali was inducted as a ghazi by a sage, Shaykh Ede Bali. By 1301, he controlled the swath of territory extending from Eskishehir to Bursa and advanced towards the old Byzantine capital of Iznik. Alarmed, the Byzantine Emperor sent a force under Muzalon to relieve Iznik. The Turks annihilated this force at the Battle of Yalakova (1301). This critical victory was a turning point for the Ottomans. Uthman's fame spread far and wide in the Muslim world and attracted a growing number of volunteers for the ghazza.

The Turks followed up this victory by occupying the regions around the cities of Iznik and Bursa, isolating them both. Uthman's son Orkhan captured Bursa in 1326. Iznik fell in 1331. Orkhan was a contemporary of Mansa Musa of the Mali Empire and Muhammed bin Tughlaq of India. Ibn Batuta visited Bursa in 1333 and described it as a beautiful town with fine mosques, markets and schools. The ghazi spirit of the Uthmania Turks won his admiration and he accompanied Orkhan on many of his expeditions against the Byzantines. The situation in Anatolia at the time was the flip

side of that in Spain. In the eastern Mediterranean the march of the ghazis brought them to the very gates of Constantinople. In contrast, the last attempt by North African Muslims to reconquer Spain from the Christians was made in 1333 and ended in total failure.

Orkhan continued his march westward, occupying the province of Karasi in 1345. The continent of Europe lay ahead of him. In 1346, he married Theodora, a Greek princess, in a tradition that was in keeping with the times when the Byzantine court sought marriage ties with the Turks to contain their advance. These marriages of convenience, however, did not arrest the Turks. The western march was placed under Sulaiman, the eldest son of Orkhan. In 1354, Sulaiman captured the Fort of Gallipolis. Ankara was captured the same year. When Sulaiman died in an accident in 1356, the march passed under the leadership of his brother Murad who stormed and captured Erdirne in 1357. This alarmed Pope Urban V who declared a Crusade in 1366. However, the response to this call was mute and Turkish advances continued. Sofia was conquered in 1385, Nish in 1386 and Salonica in 1387. The Balkan princes and the Byzantine emperor saw the futility of resisting the Turks and avidly sought an alliance with them against each other. In 1365-1366, the Bulgarian King Shishman sought the help of the Turks against a combined attack by the Hungarians and the Latin Crusaders. In 1373, the Byzantine Emperor John V accepted the overlordship of Murad and took part in the Balkan campaigns as his vassal. His son Andronicus IV remained on the throne in Constantinople under the protection of the Turks.

To the east, the Ottomans pressed their claims against the other Turkish principalities. Declaring themselves to be heirs of the Seljuks, they fought and won their struggles against the Beys of Sivas and Karaman. In 1387, Murad marched against Konya, the old capital of the Seljuks, defeated the house of Karaman and completed his conquest of Anatolia. Meanwhile, the Balkan front was far from quiet. In 1386, the Serbs were in open rebellion and were supported in their uprising by the kings of Bosnia and Bulgaria. Murad marched against Bulgaria in 1387. Bulgaria was occupied and Shishman, the King of Bulgaria was expelled. Continuing his advance, Murad met the Serbian army at the Battle of Kosova in June 1389. In a pitched battle the Serbs were defeated and the last resistance to Turkish rule in the Balkans was crushed. Murad himself was fatally wounded in the

Battle of Kosova and was succeeded by his son Bayazid, who is referred to as Yildirim in Turkish.

By the time Murad died in 1389, he had laid the foundations of a fledging empire in Anatolia and southeastern Europe. The city of Constantinople remained as an island in this sea, only because the Byzantine Emperor had accepted the overlordship of the Turks. Political centralization had begun, which was in time to embrace all of West Asia, North Africa and southeastern Europe. The spirit of the ghazis which won and founded this empire was to last for centuries and make it the pre-eminent military power in the world until the 17th century.

As an Islamic Empire, it eschewed the principles of tolerance and co-existence of peoples of different religions and nationalities. It provided political stability to the peoples of North Africa, West Asia and southeastern Europe for almost 600 years, a period longer in its duration than any other empire in recorded history.

THE MAGRIB AND SPAIN

Summary

Separated from Egypt by the Great Libyan desert and from the Sudan by the Sahara, the Maghrib, that vast area extending from Spain to Tunisia, had to chart its own course in the panorama of Islamic history. The Omayyads in Spain created a brilliant civilization wherein science and culture flourished and Muslims, Jews and Christians lived in relative harmony for five hundred years. Decay set in the 11th century as the pleasures of urban life sapped Spanish Muslims of their nomadic energy. The Crusades started in 996 with their first thrust directed at Spain and it fell, city by city, until the fall of Cordoba in 1236. Meanwhile, in the 10th century, the competing visions of Islamic history gave birth to the Shi'a Fatimids, who rose from the Maghrib to capture half of the Islamic world and transform Egypt into a land of prosperity and a beacon of learning. The ideological challenge of the Fatimids drew a response from the Abbasids of Baghdad and the Omayyads of Cordoba, each claiming to be sole Caliph for all Muslims so that there were three claimants to the Caliphate at one time. Intellectually, it provoked the dialectic of Al Ghazzali who integrated theology with tasawwuf, repudiated philosophy and Fatimid esotericism and fundamentally changed the course of Islamic history. Militarily, it precluded the possibility of a Muslim conquest of Europe, which was being plundered by the Vikings from the north. In the Maghrib, the Fatimid schism brought a Sunni reaction in the 11th century and the Murabitun revolution rose from the womb of West Africa to displace the Fatimids and hold the Crusaders at bay for a hundred years. The Murabitun yielded to the Al Muhaddithin in the 12th century, who came to power with slogans of new reforms based on Mutazilite doctrines. The Al Muhaddithin were unsuccessful in establishing rapport with the Sunni ulema of the Maliki School. They bled, trying to defend Spain against a European onslaught and were finally overwhelmed by the Crusaders at the Battle of Las Novas de Tolosa in 1212.

The Fatimid Conquest of Egypt

The Fatimid conquest of Egypt (969) was a defining moment in Islamic history. It destroyed any semblance of central authority in the Muslim world, provoked the reaction of the Turks as defenders of orthodox (Sunni) Islam, impelled the Omayyads in Spain to declare their own Caliphate, launched the powerful Murabitun revolution in western Africa, denied the Muslims their last chance to conquer Europe and was the decisive ideological provocation that was answered by the eloquence of Al Ghazzali (d. 1111). The cleavage opened by the Fatimid schism gave the Crusaders an opportunity to capture Jerusalem (1099). Finally, when the Fatimids left the center stage of history, they did so with a vengeance, contributing to the rise of the assassins. The assassinations, chief among which was that of Nizam ul Mulk (d. 1092), perhaps the ablest administrator produced by Islam after Omar bin Abdul Aziz, played havoc with the Islamic body politic.

We have traced in previous chapters the political developments surrounding the struggles of Shi'a Aan-e-Ali. In time, the Shi'a movement itself split into several groups over the issue of Imamate succession. The principal rift occurred after Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq. When his eldest son Imam Ismail predeceased him, Imam Ja'afar, the sixth imam in the succession of the Imamate, nominated his second son Imam Musa Kadim as the 7th Imam. The majority of Shi'as accepted this nomination. However, a minority refused to accept this verdict, declared Imam Ismail to be the 7th Imam and recognized the Imamate only through his lineage. These are called the Fatimid Shi'as or the Seveners. From the Fatimids are derived the Agha Khanis and the Bohras, two powerful groups of Muslims who have played an important part in the politics of East Africa and in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

The Abbasids (750-1258) were even more ruthless towards Shi'a dissidence than the Omayyads. Shorn of any hope of political success, the

Shi'a movements went underground. Our focus in this chapter is on the Fatimids. The confluence of several historical developments helped the Fatimid movement. In the 9th century, the consolidation of vast territories in Asia, Africa and Europe led to an enormous increase in trade. Prosperity ensued. Great cities sprang up and older towns grew larger. The movement of the rural population to the cities, in search of protection from marauding tribesmen, assisted the urbanization process. Conversion to Islam was taking place at a rapid pace both in Asia and North Africa and the new Muslims found refuge in the cities from the pressure of their kinsmen who had not yet converted. Damascus, Baghdad, Basra, Kufa, Hamadan, Isfahan, Herat, Bukhara, Samarqand, Kashgar in Asia; Fustat, Sijilmasa, Tahert, Kairouan, Awdaghost and Tadmakka in Africa; Seville, Cordoba and Toledo in Europe became centers of trade. Colonies established by Muslim merchants existed as far away as Malabar in India, Zanzibar in Africa and Canton in China. Brisk trade stimulated the demand for manufactured goods such as brass work, gold jewelry, silk brocade, fine carpets and iron and steel products. Guilds arose in the urban centers, organized around specific trades and skills. The Fatimid movement zeroed in on these guilds to propagate their ideas.

The Abbasid Caliphate also lost much of its political and military power after Caliph Mutawakkil was killed by his Turkish guards in 861. The emergence of the Turks was a new element in the body politic of Islam. Initially hired by the Caliphs as bodyguards to balance the established power of Arabs and Persians, the Turks displaced both the Arabs and the Persians and rose to control the destiny of the Caliphate itself. After Muktafi (d. 908), the Caliphs became mere pawns in the hands of Turkish generals. Sensing the political impotence of Baghdad, local chieftains in the far-flung provinces of the empire asserted their independence and established local dynasties. Idris, a great, great grandson of Ali ibn Abu Talib established a Shi'a dynasty in Morocco (788). After the year 800, an Arab general Al Aghlab and his descendants exercised autonomous control over Algeria and Tunisia. In 868, a Turkish General Ibn Tulun seized Egypt and established the Tulunid dynasty. In the east, Tahir, a general who had helped Caliph Mamun in the civil war between the two brothers, Amin and Mamun, was granted autonomy over Khorasan. After the year 922, the Tahirids dropped any pretense of allegiance to Baghdad and ruled as independent rulers. In 932, Buyeh, a Persian, established a powerful dynasty at the borders of

Persia and Iraq. The Buyids, who were Ithna Ashari Shi'as, quickly overran Basra and Kufa. In the year 945 they captured Baghdad itself and forced the Caliph to surrender effective power to the Alavis. But they stopped short of eliminating the Abbasids, partly because there was no single person who was acceptable as Imam to all Muslims and partly out of concern for the reaction of the Turks who were emerging as a powerful new military element. Nonetheless, the Buyids came as close as the Ithna Asharis ever did in establishing their political control over the world of Islam.

Perhaps the most persuasive reason for the success of the Fatimid movement was the internal corruption in the ruling circles. After Harun al Rashid, Baghdad became a dazzling city of splendor. Long gone was the spartan simplicity of the first Caliphs. In a bygone era, Caliph Omar ibn al Khattab had traveled from Madina to Jerusalem to accept its surrender, sharing a single camel for the journey with a servant. Ali ibn Abu Talib would fast for days on a ration of dried dates. By contrast, the Caliphs of the 9th century moved in golden chariots with an entourage of thousands. Lavish sums were spent on pomp and ceremony. Surrounded by eunuchs and dancing girls, the court of Baghdad was no different from the Byzantine court in Constantinople or the Persian courts it had displaced. The Islamic Empire was now held together by political expediency and brute force rather than by fidelity to a higher transcendental idea, as was the case in early Islam. In North Africa there was continued tension between rural Berbers and the Arab city dwellers. In Persia, the Turks had displaced the Persians from the centers of power but were looked down upon by both the Arabs and the Persians as pushy intruders. Corruption was rampant and it was time for a revolutionary movement like that of the Fatimids who promised a new era led by the Fatimid imams.

For more than a hundred years after Imam Ja'afar, the Fatimid movement ran like a subterranean stream of hot lava in the Islamic body politic. Then, in the second half of the 9th century, it burst out from horizon to horizon like a hundred volcanoes spewing forth at once. The architect of this movement was Abdullah bin Maimun. He was a student of Abul Khattab, who had at one time studied under Imam Ja'afar, but was executed by Caliph Mansur as a heretic for his ideas on Taqiyya (permissibility of denying your beliefs if you are threatened by death or grave injury). As we have pointed out earlier, the Fatimids had refused to accept Imam Ja'afar's

verdict nominating Musa Kadim as the 7th Imam, claiming instead that Imam Ismail had not died but was just hidden from view.

The lineage of hidden imams from Ismail till the latter part of the 9th century is not clear, but in 875, one Hamdan Karamat, set up his operations near Baghdad. In 893, the Karamathians, as the followers of Karamat are called, captured Yemen under the leadership of Abu Abdallah. Using Yemen as his base, Abu Abdallah raised an army of Bedouins and Yemenis. In 903, he moved on Damascus and massacred its inhabitants. Basra was plundered in 923. The Karamathians were ruthless. They attacked caravans of Hajj pilgrims on the caravan routes from Basra to Madina and massacred thousands of men, women and children. In 928, they attacked Mecca and carried off the Hijre Aswad (black stone) from the Ka'ba to Bahrain where they set up their headquarters. There the black stone remained for 22 years until it was returned to Mecca in 950 upon orders of the Fatimid Caliph al Mansur. Baghdad moved swiftly to retake Damascus but in the meantime the Karamathian movement had spread to North Africa.

The Arabs called the territories that today comprise Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia Maghrib al Aqsa (the farthest western frontier). More often, this area is simply referred to as the Maghrib. Maghrib al Aqsa was the hinge around which the fate of Muslim Spain and southwestern Europe revolved. The region was an historic caldron of discontent and sporadic rebellion against external authority. In part, this was a reflection of the free spirit of the mountain Berbers and the desert Sinhajars. The Arab experience was no different from that of the Romans who had clung to fortified positions along the Mediterranean shores but were unsuccessful in subduing the Atlas mountain interior.

There was also tension between the Arab city dwellers and the Berbers who lived in the hinterland. The classical Islamic civilization was primarily urban. People congregated in towns and cities for safety as well as for economic opportunity. Resentment against the perceived haughtiness of the city dwelling Arabs surfaced time and again as rebellion against established authority. The Berbers welcomed new ideas that challenged the status quo as a vehicle for expressing their resentment and anger. For instance, in the year 900, a Persian Kharijite, Rustum, moved to the Maghrib and established his base there. He successfully challenged the local Aghlabid emirs who represented Abbasid authority. Support from the Berbers and the

Sinhaja enabled Rustum to establish a Kharijite dynasty in southern Algeria centered on Sijilmasa. The Kharijites—an extremist group who espoused killing those who did not agree with them—rejected the claims of both the Sunnis and the Shi'as for leadership of the Islamic community and held that the Caliphate should be open to anyone, Arab or non-Arab. This seemingly democratic position was welcome to Berber ears. The Kharijites survived in isolated pockets long after the Rustamid kingdom disappeared. Ibn Batuta reported the existence of Kharijite communities in north central Africa as late as 1350. (The American traveler John Skolle has recently provided an account of the remnants of this community. He mentions in his travelogue a community around Ghardaja in Algeria, as “of the Ibadite faith ... Muslim Puritans ... driven south ... in the 11th century ...”. Ref: John Skolle, *The Road to Timbaktu*, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London, 1956).

South of the Atlas belt, the powerful Sinhaja tended their sheep and roamed freely, much as their ancestors had for centuries and acted as power brokers between the Berbers and the Arabs. There developed in the Maghrib a triangular relationship between the Berbers, the Arabs and the Sinhajans, much as there was a triangular relationship between the Arabs, the Persians and the Turks in Persia and Central Asia. Occasionally, there was a fourth element in this relationship, namely the Sudanese from sub-Saharan Africa, who were recruited by the Ikhshidids and later by the Fatimids, in their armed forces as a counterbalance to the power of the Berbers.

Conditions were ripe in North Africa for a revolutionary movement like that of the Fatimids. The Aghlabid rulers had become more interested in women and wine than in the affairs of state. Law and order had deteriorated to such an extent that people longed for deliverance by a Mahdi. In 907, Abu Abdallah, who had by this time lost Damascus to the Abbasids, proceeded to North Africa. By the sheer magnetism of his character and the force of his arguments, he converted the powerful Kitama tribe to Fatimid doctrines. In 909, taking advantage of the incompetence of Aghlabid Ziadatulla, Abu Abdallah moved on Salmania, driving out the Aghlabids. It was now time to invite the Fatimid Imam Ubaidullah who was living in Syria. After a harrowing travail, with Abbasid agents hot on his trail, Ubaidullah reached the Maghrib. He was arrested in Sijilmasa but Abu Abdullah moved with a powerful force on the town, freed his mentor and

proclaimed Ubaidullah to be the long awaited Mahdi and the hidden Imam and the first Fatimid Caliph.

Ubaidullah al Mahdi, the first Fatimid Caliph, was an able general, a capable administrator, a shrewd but ruthless politician and was tolerant of the Sunnis who made up the vast majority of his subjects. He established a new capital, Mahdiya, near modern Tunis. His first act was to assassinate Abu Abdallah and eliminate any possibility of a challenge from that quarter. History repeats itself. The fate of Abu Abdallah was similar to that of Abu Muslim (d.750) who was disposed of by the Abbasids once they came to power. After consolidating his hold on Algeria and Tunisia, he moved west into Morocco displacing the floundering Idrisid dynasty (922). But his eyes were on the prosperous provinces of Spain to the northwest and Egypt to the east.

The conquest of Morocco provoked a response from the powerful Umayyad, Abdur Rahman III of Spain, who declared himself the Caliph in Cordoba (929) and the protector of Sunni Islam in Africa and Spain. There emerged at the same time three claimants for the Caliphate based in Baghdad in Asia, Mahdiya in Africa and Cordoba in Europe.

Ubaidullah died in the year 934 without realizing his dream of conquering Spain or subduing Egypt. His son Abul Kasim was a fanatic and tried to force his brand of Islam on everyone. He is best remembered for building a powerful navy and his raids on France, Italy and Egypt. To pay for these adventures, taxation had to be increased. The Berbers rebelled against this excessive taxation. Centered on Sijilmasa, which was a Kharijite stronghold, the rebellion gathered momentum and received support from the Spanish Umayyads. Abul Kasim was cornered in Mahdiya where he died in 946. His son Mansur, with the help of the Sinhajas, put down the rebellion in 947. To teach the Spanish Umayyads and the Moroccans a lesson, he stormed the Maghrib all the way to the Atlantic, devastating much of what lay in his path. All of North Africa except Mauritania was conquered. According to Ibn Khaldun, the Maghrib never fully recovered from the devastation caused by the Fatimid-Sinhaja invasions. The power of the cities in North Africa was destroyed. The social political vacuum created by this devastation was in part responsible for the germination of the Murabitun revolution, which was soon to engulf all of West Africa and Spain.

It was under Muiz (d. 975) that the Fatimids achieved their greatest success. Muiz first turned his attention to the west. Taking advantage of the preoccupation of the Spanish Umayyad Abdur Rahman III with the Christians to the north, Muiz took Mauritania and brought the Maghrib, with the exception of the small Ceuta-Tangier peninsula, under his control. The powerful Spaniards blocked any further advance to the west, so Muiz turned his attention to the east where conditions were much more favorable. The Buyid takeover of Baghdad (945) had so weakened the Abbasids that the Fatimids sensed their golden opportunity to capture Egypt. At the time, Egypt was under the military control of the Ikhshidids, a Turkish clan who had displaced the Tulunids (933) and ruled in the name of the Abbasids in Baghdad. Abbasid power in the eastern Mediterranean had been further weakened by Byzantine attacks in Anatolia, Crete and Syria. The Fatimids marched with a force of more than 100,000 Berbers, Sinhajas and Sudanese under a Turkish general Jawhar al Rumi and in a pitched battle on the banks of the Nile in 969, defeated the Ikhshidids.

The victorious Fatimids entered Egypt and founded a new capital near old Fustat, which they named Al Qahira (Cairo, 969). With Egypt under his control, Muiz's armies fanned out into Syria and took Damascus in 973. Mecca and Madina fell soon thereafter. For almost a hundred years, it was the name of the Fatimid sovereigns in Cairo and not of the Abbasids in Baghdad that was taken after the Friday sermons in the great mosques of Mecca and Madina.

The Fatimids were bound to attempt a conquest of Asia to fulfill their vision of a universal Islamic Empire ruled by the Fatimid imams. In this attempt they were not to be successful. There were several reasons for their failure. The Karamathians, a splinter group among the Fatimids, considered the mainstream Fatimids soft on the Sunnis. The revolution they hoped for had not materialized. Instead, the Fatimids, with some exceptions, had established a working relationship with their Sunni subjects. The disgruntled Karamathians attacked Fatimid positions in Syria and twice invaded Egypt. They were beaten back with heavy losses but they controlled the military routes to northern Syria and hence effectively blocked a Fatimid advance into Asia.

Second, the Buyids who controlled Iraq and Persia resisted the Fatimids for ideological reasons. The Buyids considered Imam Musa Kadim to be the

heir to Imam Ja'afar. They considered the Fatimids to be renegades who followed Imam Ismail after Imam Ja'afar. Although the Buyids controlled Baghdad, they had established a working relationship with the majority Sunnis and had shied away from displacing the Abbasids. Third, there was a resurgent Byzantine Empire, which had built up its naval power, captured Crete and continuously challenged both the Abbasids and the Fatimids in the eastern Mediterranean. Fourth, the Seljuk (Turkish) presence in Persia and Central Asia was decidedly in favor of the Abbasids and tilted the balance of power in favor of orthodox Islam.

Egypt prospered under the Fatimids. No longer was the Nile valley a mere province, with its tax revenues carted off to far away Baghdad. It was now the center of an empire extending from the Euphrates to the Atlantic. Sitting astride the continents of Africa and Asia, Egypt controlled the trade routes from North Africa and Europe to India and the Far East. Gold flowed into Egypt from Ghana, providing a firm basis for a solid currency. The bazaars of Cairo were full of goods from East Africa, India, Indonesia and China. Alexandria became a port of exchange and a world-class trade center. European travelers such as William of Tyre marveled at the prosperity of Egypt. Italian merchants in Venice, capitalizing on the proximity of Egypt, became successful entrepreneurs. Venice grew in wealth and power and was to play an important role in the Crusades looming on the horizon.

Conversely, the loss of Egypt and North Africa meant that hard times had fallen upon Baghdad. Cut off from the Mediterranean by the Fatimids and the Byzantines, Baghdad became dependent for its trade on land routes to India and China. Loss of revenues meant loss of political power and the Caliphs in Baghdad became increasingly dependent on the Turkish sultans for their revenues. The sultans, in turn, raided India with increasing frequency in search of gold and plunder. Between the years 1000 and 1030, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna conducted no less than 17 raids into India. The territories of the Caliphate extended to no more than a few miles outside Baghdad. Since the power of the fatwa had been co-opted by the ulema from the earliest days of Islam, the Caliphate became, in effect, a wistful symbol of long lost Muslim unity. Decentralization set in, hastening the fragmentation of Asia into principalities and local kingdoms. This was a

social political matrix almost tailor-made for the rise of the Seljuk Turks, who rose from nomads to become the masters of Asia.

Muiz died in 996 and his son Al Aziz became the caliph in Cairo. He was a consummate ruler and an able organizer. He appointed a well-known financier, Yakub bin Killis as his minister. Killis wisely managed the fiscal affairs of the far-flung empire. Taxation was reduced, trade encouraged, currency stabilized and the empire prospered. Al Aziz also built a powerful navy as a counterweight to the resurgent

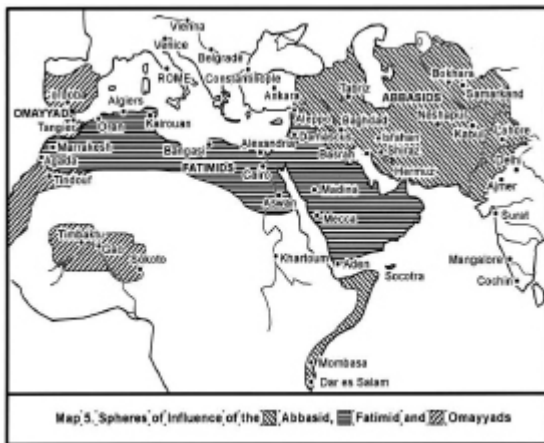
Byzantines and the Umayyads in Spain. But he also recruited Turkish soldiers into his army to balance off the Berbers and the Sudanese, a decision that in time led to the takeover of the Fatimid dynasty by the Turks.

Al Hakim succeeded his father Al Aziz as the caliph in 996, the same year that Pope Gregory V declared the Crusades against the Muslims. Al Hakim, an eccentric man, killed his regent Barjawan, forbade women to appear in the streets, prohibited business at night, persecuted the minority Jews and Christians and in 1009 began the demolition of churches and synagogues. This was a reaction to the laxity of his father who had married a Christian and was protecting his flank against charges of laxity leveled by the Sunnis. Perhaps also, he was suspicious of the Christians in his midst because the Crusades had started in earnest in 996 with attacks on North Africa.

The Fatimids controlled a vast empire, but they had to continually come to terms with the standards of moral rectitude and religious dogma of their subjects. The dominant opinion in the community, espoused by orthodox (Sunni) Islam, had always gravitated towards a consensus based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the ijma of his Companions. Such consensus was the central axis around which Muslim history revolved, although at times the impact of peripheral opinions proved to be important. Al Hakim was faced with a rising military challenge from Christian Europe while guarding his rear against orthodox discontent with the perceived excesses of the Fatimids. His father Al Aziz was a compromiser who had tried to weld together a consensus of tolerance by marrying a Christian. Al Hakim began a drive to convert the Sunnis and the Ithna Asharis to Fatimid doctrines. A Dar-ul-Hikmah was established in 1004 in Cairo to impart training to Fatimid dais (missionaries[^]). Fatimid propaganda was extremely

active throughout the Islamic world. There was even a Fatimid ruler in Multan in what is today Pakistan. In the year 1058, the Fatimids briefly controlled the suburbs of Baghdad itself. These attempts drew an immediate reaction from Baghdad where the Abbasid Caliph Kaim denounced the Fatimids as renegades.

In 1017, two Fatimid da'is, Hamza and Darazi, arrived in Cairo from Persia. They preached that the divine spirit transmitted through



Ali ibn Abu Talib and the Imams had been transmitted to Al Hakim, who had thus become God incarnate. The doctrine was repugnant to the orthodox Egyptians. So, Darazi retired to the mountains of Lebanon where he found a more favorable reception. The Druze, followers of Darazi doctrines, are to be found in Lebanon and Syria today. They believe in reincarnation and Al Hakim as the reincarnate of God who will return at the end of the world.

Messianism as a reaction to political oppression is a recurrent theme in Islamic history. The belief that a Mahdi will return to reestablish a just world order after the example of the Prophet recurs in many parts of the Muslim world. This belief is to be found among the entire spectrum of Islamic opinion-Sunni, Twelver Shi'a and Fatimid Shi'a. It occurs with greater fervor in the Sudan, Persia and India. Concrete examples of this are to be found in the appearance of the Mahdi in modern Sudan in the 19th century; the movement of Uthman dan Fuduye in West Africa in the 19th

century; the beliefs of the Mahdavi sect in India; the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam among the

Twelvers; and the disappearance of the Seventh Imam among the Seveners. Messianism is not without its ideological pitfalls. Most Muslims managed their Messianism within the limits of Tawhid and stayed in the mainstream of Islam. The Fatimid positions on the transmutation of the soul, advanced by al Hakim, were rejected by orthodox Muslims as heresy.

The excesses of Al Hakim hastened the downfall of the Fatimids. Under Mustansir (1036-1096), civil strife took over. Berber, Sudanese and Turkish troops competed for power in the armed forces. In 1047 Hejaz broke away and the name of the Fatimid monarch was removed from the khutba in the great mosques of Mecca and Madina. The Murabitun revolution consumed the Maghrib in 1051. During the period 1090-1094, Egypt was hit with a severe drought of Biblical proportions and the economy was crippled. The Crusades—active first in Spain—descended upon North Africa and then on the eastern Mediterranean. In 1072, Palermo in Sicily was lost to the Crusaders. By 1091 all of Sicily was under Latin control. Mahdiya, the first capital of the Fatimids, was attacked by sea.

Meanwhile, the Turks and the Fatimids fought for control of the Syrian highlands. Seljuk warriors regained Damascus from the Fatimids and reestablished the authority of the Abbasids all the way to El Arish. Under Taghril Bey and Alp Arslan, all of West Asia except for a few strongholds like Acre and Jerusalem were taken from Egyptian control. The lines of control ran through a plateau embracing Jerusalem. Hostility between the Seljuks and the Fatimids prevented any effective coordination against the Crusaders who took Jerusalem by assault from the Fatimid garrison in 1099. The retreating Fatimids turned to assassination for vengeance. Under Hassan Sabbah, the assassins became an effective underground movement and wreaked havoc on the Seljuks with their cloak and dagger murders.

After Muntasir (d. 1096), the Fatimid court presented a long saga of murders and mayhem. Power passed on to the viziers who wielded their authority through intrigue and assassination. In 1171, the last of the Fatimid Caliphs, Al Aazid, died. Salahuddin abolished the Fatimid dynasty and Egypt passed once again into the Abbasid domain.

Civilizations are held together by transcendental ideas. After the first four Caliphs, Islamic civilization lost the transcendence of Tawhid. The Fatimids came to power promising to bring that transcendence back to the world of Islam. They captured half of the Islamic world but remained a minority elite ruling over a vast Sunni world. Umayyad Spain challenged their authority. Sub-Saharan Africa remained loyal to Abbasid authority. Yet, the Fatimid presence in Egypt marked a high point in the development of Islamic civilization. The monarchs in Baghdad, Cairo and Cordoba, each claiming to be the Caliph, competed with each other in establishing universities, encouraging learning, art and culture. The Fatimids established Al Azhar University, the oldest surviving institution of higher learning in the world, in 971 (We do note that the Qawariyun University in Fez, Morocco claims to have been founded in 812 and is still functioning). Universities in Baghdad, Bukhara, Samarqand, Nishapur, Cairo, Palermo, Kairouan, Sijilmasa, Cordoba and Toledo competed with each other in attracting men of learning. Artisans were encouraged to produce the finest work of art. Egyptian brocades, brass work and woodwork were valued throughout Europe and Asia. It was through Sicily, no less than through Spain, that Islamic ideas and knowledge were passed on to Europe. Even during the height of the Crusades, Latin monarchs employed and patronized Muslim scholars. The Sicilian monarchs considered it an honor to be buried in caskets made in Egypt. Roger II of Sicily not only continued the University at Palermo which had been established by Muslims, he also patronized at his court the well known geographer al Idrisi, who was one of the finest scholars of the age.

Islamic history is animated by a vision to establish a universal community enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in God. But there have been different interpretations of this vision. In the 10th century there were at least four different versions of that vision. The Fatimids based in North Africa claimed the Imamate in the lineage of Imam Ismail. The Karamatians were also Fatimids but were extremist in their views and believed that their version of Islam be imposed on all Muslims, by force if necessary. The Buyids were Twelvers who believed in the Imamate in the lineage of Imam Musa

Kazim. Then there were the Sunnis, the vast majority of the population, who accepted the Caliphate in Baghdad. In the 10th century, these

conflicting visions collided on the political military plane. And out of this confusion emerged the victorious Turks, displacing both the Caliphate and the Imamate by a new military-political institution-the Sultanate. But the excesses of the age also gave birth to a revolution—the Murabitun revolution in Africa-and provoked the dialectic of Al Ghazzali, which altered the way Muslims looked upon Islam itself. Their internal rivalry denied the Muslims their last chance to conquer Europe. In the 9th and 10th centuries, Europe lived in the age of imagination, dominated by the talisman and ruled by feudal lords. After the death of Charlemagne in 814, his Carolingian heirs fought among themselves for the remnants of the Frankish kingdom. Faced with Viking attacks from the north, Europe could not defend itself in the south and was militarily vulnerable. The mutual hostility between the Fatimids, the Umayyads and the Abbasids prevented them from exploiting this historic window of opportunity. The Aghlabid conquest of Sicily and their raids into southern Italy as far as Rome in 846 marked the farthest advance of Muslims into southern Europe. The armies of the Fatimids, the Umayyads, the Buyids and the Abbasids spent their energies primarily at each other's throats.

Abdur Rahman III of Spain

Three men of giant stature dominated Islamic history in the 10th century. These were Abdur Rahman III of Spain, Muiz of Egypt and Mahmud of Ghazna. The first two determined the flow of historical events in the Mediterranean region, whereas Mahmud of Ghazna had a decisive impact on Central Asia and the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

Abdur Rahman III was the ablest and most accomplished of the Omayyad rulers of Spain. As a young man he received an excellent education under the ulema of Cordoba. His intellect made him a prince among the scholars and a favorite among the literary circles of the day. His character and exemplary conduct won him the allegiance of the court and the common man alike. His first act after becoming the ruler of Spain was to abrogate all taxes that were not in accordance with the Shariah. These taxes had been imposed to support the lavish expenditures of the royal household. The move won for him the support of the peasant and the merchant alike. His second act was to offer a general amnesty to all rebels who accepted him as their sovereign.

In the year 912, when Abdur Rahman ascended the throne as a young man of 23, Spain was adrift without central authority. It had been more than two hundred years since Tariq and Musa had landed at Jabl al Tariq and marched forth to conquer Spain in the name of Tawhid. By the 10th century, chiefs and noblemen were more animated by the love of money than the love of God. Tribal affiliation and wealth moved them far more than any transcendental idea. Upon ascending the throne, the young ruler faced two major challenges. The first was from the Arab aristocracy based in the old Visigoth capital city of Toledo. The second was the military-ideological challenge from the Fatimids who had made no secret of their desire to conquer Spain.

The challenge from the Arab aristocracy was inherent in the pattern of invasions from North Africa. As successive waves of Muslim armies landed in Spain, they settled in the various provinces according to the desires of their tribal chiefs. Thus the Bani Hud controlled Saragossa, the Zul Nun settled in Toledo, the Banu Abbad were powerful in Seville, the Berbers controlled Granada and the newly arrived Slavs from eastern Europe settled in Valencia and the Mediterranean coast. The court of Cordoba was sustained by the allegiance of these tribes. Gradually, the tribal chieftains accumulated privileges, which they were reluctant to give up. The spartan simplicity of the desert warrior gave way to the luxurious life style of the emirs. The court in Cordoba gradually became a prisoner of this privileged class. So, when Abdur Rahman abandoned the excessive taxes and took away the privileges of this class, there was an immediate uproar. Particularly upset were the noblemen of Toledo. They had harbored a long-standing grudge against Cordoba for moving the capital out of Toledo. Abdur Rahman put down each of the rebellions with firmness. When he was victorious, he treated the vanquished with dignity and won over their allegiance. The principalities of Bobastro, Badajoz, Zamorra, Simancas, Osma and Toledo were subdued one by one. He then turned his attention to the Christian territories to the north. The Christian chieftains had conducted numerous raids on the Emir's territories and had devastated border areas. In a series of brilliant campaigns, Abdur Rahman forced Leon, Castile, Navarre, Galicia and Alva into paying him tribute.

The challenge from the Fatimids was far more serious. The Fatimids considered the progeny of Imam Ismail to be the only legitimate heir to the leadership of the Islamic community and were bitter enemies both of the Abbasids in Baghdad and the Omayyads in Cordoba. By 923, they had captured all of North Africa, had displaced the Idrisi kingdom from Morocco and Algeria and had their eyes on Spain. A renegade Spanish chieftain, Omar bin Hafsun, who had become a

Christian, openly challenged the rule of Cordoba and sought the help not only of the Fatimids but also of the Christian principalities to the north. Abdur Rahman was busy at the time rendering military assistance to his Idrisi allies against the Fatimids. He was forced to withdraw from North Africa to face the rebel.

The Fatimids sent a fleet across the Mediterranean to assist Omar bin Hafsun, but this sea-borne force was intercepted by Abdur Rahman's navy and was destroyed. Cornered in the mountains of eastern Spain, Omar bin Hafsun sued for peace. Abdur Rahman pardoned him and let him keep a small principality under his own authority.

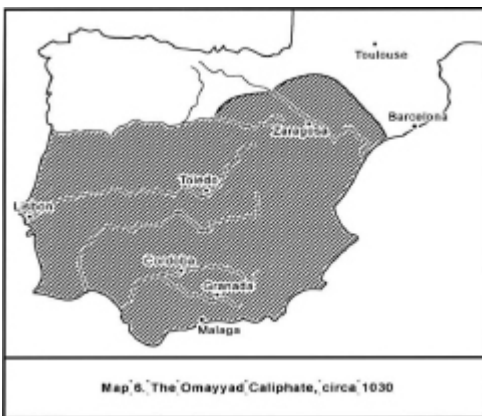
The breakup of tribal influence enabled Abdur Rahman to establish a standing professional army of more than 150,000, perhaps the finest in the world at that time. But it also destroyed the tribal cohesion that had sustained Umayyad power in Spain for more than 200 years. In the view of Ibn Khaldun, this act sowed the seeds for the ultimate disintegration of the Spanish Caliphate of Cordoba.

In North Africa the Fatimid threat was persistent. In 910, the Fatimid Ubaidullah had declared himself the Mahdi and the Caliph of all Muslims. At this time, the Caliphate in Baghdad was in disarray and the Abbasid Caliphs had become mere pawns in the hands of their Turkish generals. The Buyids from Persia had become rulers of the Abbasid domains in all but name. These were clear signals that the Abbasids had lost their political and military power. In 929, Abdur Rahman declared himself to be the Caliph and took the title of Emir-ul-Momineen. In effect, this was a response to the political and military challenge from the Fatimids in North Africa. Thus there emerged three claimants to the Caliphate in the 10th century. With the ascent of Muiz in 953 and his capture of Egypt in 969, the balance of power tilted decidedly in favor of the Fatimids. One by one, Fatimid armies overran Spanish strongholds in North Africa. Except for a small stretch of land around Ceuta, Muiz subdued all of North Africa. The Fatimids had not given up their dream of capturing Andalus and continued to provide assistance to any insurrection that challenged Omayyad rule in the peninsula. In 955, Abdur Rahman's navy intercepted and sank some of Muiz's ships ferrying supplies to Andalusian insurgents. In retaliation,

Muiz ordered his viceroy in Sicily, Hassan bin Ali, to raid and lay waste the Spanish coast of Almeria.

The mutual rivalry between the Omayyads in Spain and the Fatimids in Egypt destroyed the last chance for Muslims to conquer southern Europe. After the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire in France in the 9th century, Europe was in political disarray. The devastating raids from the Nordic Vikings had crippled northern and central Europe. Faced with this

onslaught from the north, Europe was vulnerable in the south. However, the Sunni Omayyads and the Shi'a Fatimids spent more energy fighting each other than projecting their power into Europe. Indeed, the emergence of two centers of political power in the Mediterranean, one based in Cairo and the other in Cordoba, gave an opportunity to the Christian monarchs to play off one against the other. Sensing this historic rivalry, the Greek monarch of Constantinople, involved as he was in a military confrontation with the Fatimids for control of Crete and Sicily, sent an ambassador to Abdur Rahman III. The monarchs of Germany, France and the principalities of the Italian peninsula made similar representations. Spain, under Abdur Rahman had become a major player in the geopolitics of North Africa, southern Europe and West Asia.



Abdur Rahman was a consummate soldier, an accomplished scholar, a great builder and a just ruler. He forged Spain into a single military-political entity shorn of the petty rivalries of regional chiefs and Arab tribes. Scholars flocked to his court from Kairouan, Cairo, Baghdad and Bukhara. His personal collection of books exceeded 400,000. The court nobility, copying the ways of their sovereign, had their own collections of books. No writer, no scribe, no teacher was without work. Under Abdur Rahman, Cordoba grew to be the largest and most cosmopolitan urban center in the world with a population exceeding one million. The city had more than 100,000 homes, 80,000 shops, 700 mosques and 900 public baths. The streets were paved and were patrolled. The shops were filled with goods from all over the world and Andalusian merchants were known in distant

parts of Eurasia. Agriculture received particular attention and Spain became an agricultural paradise. Abdur Rahman enlarged and embellished the great mosque of Cordoba. His principal architectural achievement was the construction of his capital Madinat az Zahra, a marble city constructed three miles from Cordoba. So beautiful was this city that visitors came from far and wide to see and marvel at its beauty.

Abdur Rahman ruled over his kingdom with justice towards people of all religions. Christians and Jews received equal protection under the law. Spain became the most cosmopolitan kingdom on earth. The Caliph made no distinction between his own household and the common man in matters of justice. When one of his sons was tried by the courts and convicted of treason, Abdur Rahman sentenced him to death against the entreaties of his own household. After the sentence was carried out, Abdur Rahman was so struck with sorrow that he was never seen to smile again.

Abdur Rahman III passed away in the year 961 and was buried at Madinat-az-Zahra. His reign marked the zenith of Islamic civilization in Spain and the pinnacle of its golden age.

The Murabitun Revolution

The Murabitun revolution was one of the few genuine mass movements in Islamic history. Growing out of the womb of Africa, it engulfed two continents and played a decisive role in historical developments in Africa and Spain alike. As a mass movement, European as well as Muslim scholars have studied it extensively. Ibn Khaldun used it as a basis for his theory of the rise and fall of civilizations. According to Ibn Khaldun, civilizations are held together by *asabiyah* (primal cohesiveness). The characteristics that foster cohesiveness are to be found in profusion among the nomads of the desert. The nomads, acting as agents of change, overcome older civilizations and bring in new blood as well as the virtues of the desert: integrity, virility, courage, steadfastness and commitment to the tribe. With time, they settle down, become city dwellers and succumb to the vices that characterize city life. Decay sets in, which in turn is overcome by a new wave of conquest from the desert. It was Ibn Khaldun's view that in the 11th century, Muslim North Africa and Spain had exhausted their virility to the vices of a luxurious city life. The Murabitun revolution was the tribal wave from the desert that overcame the corruption of city life and replaced it with the *asabiyah* of the desert.

Engel, one of the architects of Marxist thought, viewed the Murabitun revolution in purely economic terms. He held that the impoverished Sanhaja tribes of the desert wanted to punish the rich, morally lax city dwellers and confiscate their wealth. Max Weber, a

German historian, held that both economic and religious elements were present in the uprising of the desert tribes.

It is our thesis that the causes for the rise and fall of Muslim societies are to be found in the internal dialectic of the community. Islamic history revolves around the axis of faith. It has been a recurrent effort of Muslims to construct their lives in accordance with the dictates of their faith. Even where the primary motives for a struggle were external, such as the resistance to European colonialism in West Africa in the 19th century or the

struggles against foreign domination, they were packaged in religious terms.

The thrust of this global struggle is to create an ideal Islamic society enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. This effort is guided by a consensus of the community based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Even where the trigger for a movement arises out of peripheral sources, the mass of the struggle always gravitates towards a consensus of the believers. In the 11th century, the Maghrib was rife with restlessness. The region had not yet recovered from the devastations wrought by Fatimid Egypt in the previous century. The majority of the Arabs and Berbers, who were Sunni, had acquiesced to Fatimid rule but had never fully accepted it. The extremist Kharijites had established a kingdom in southern Algeria and had made significant headway in converting a large number of people to their point of view. The peripheral Fatimid and Kharijite sources applied an impulse for change and the center of mass based on Sunni Islam was beginning to stir. The Murabitun revolution was thus a mass expression of a desire to reform and restore Sunni Islam over competing visions offered by the Kharijites and the Fatimids.

The region of Mauritania, inhabited by the Sanhaja, was the cradle for the Murabitun revolution. The word Murabitun derives its origin from the word rabat, meaning, a fortress guarding a frontier. In the year 1035, Yahya bin Ibrahim, a leader of the Sinhajas, performed his Hajj. On his return from Mecca, he stopped off at the great University at Kairouan, a stronghold of the Maliki School of Fiqh. Yahya bin Ibrahim requested the rector of the university, Abu Imran al Farsi to send one of his students to Mauritania. Abu Imran chose one of his former students, Abdullah bin Yasin. On their way through southern Algeria, the caravan passed through areas where the influence of splinter groups such as the Kharijites was strong. Deeply disturbed, Abdullah bin Yasin resolved to wage a struggle to revive orthodox Islam in West Africa.

The Maghrib was seething with discontent and the Murabitun rapidly consolidated their hold on the region. By 1051 the entire area west of Kairouan was under their sway. For administrative purposes, Abdullah bin Yasin kept the oversight of the southern regions consisting of Senegal, Mauritania and southern Morocco under his direct control while delegating the management of the northern territories around the Mediterranean basin

to his cousin Yusuf bin Tashfin. While political consolidation was taking place in North Africa, Muslim power in Spain was rapidly disintegrating. It had been more than 300 years since Tariq had landed his troops across the straits of Gibraltar and having burned the boats that had ferried his men across the narrow straits that separate Africa from Europe, commanded them to move forward in the name of Tawhid.

The faith that had propelled Tariq into Europe in 707 had by the year 1051 dissipated and given way to politics and opportunism. The Omayyad Caliphate in Cordoba had dissolved in the year 1032 and in its place sprang up petty principalities jostling with each other for prestige and power. The cohesion fostered by faith had given way to opportunism based on tribal and family loyalties. But tribe and family cannot replace the transcendence of faith based on Tawhid. Spain was therefore like a piece of cracked glass ready to shatter.

Meanwhile, in Europe, Pope Urban II declared a Crusade for the conquest of Jerusalem (1095). The thrust of the Crusaders in the early part of the 12th century had been Sicily, North Africa and Spain. The disintegration of the Caliphate of Cordoba and the simultaneous regression of Fatimid power in Egypt was an invitation for European powers to flex their muscles. Roger II captured Sicily, providing a base in the Mediterranean for the invasion of Palestine. In 1060, the Crusaders raided the North African coast but could not hold onto their gains due to the resurgent Murabitun power. However, these were only sideshows. The first pitched battles of the Crusades were fought on

Spanish soil. It was here that the crescent and the cross met in battle, almost fifty years before the focus shifted to Palestine, Syria and the city of Jerusalem. And when the ledger of the Crusades was drawn up 300 years later, it was Spain that was first won and was then lost from the fold of Islam.

The Crusades began in earnest in Spain in 1017. Rallied by the Church, knights from Burgundy in France streamed into Spain to join the local Crusaders against the Muslims. In 1026, Sancho captured Castile and made it the capital of his kingdom. His son Ferdinand I captured Leon in 1037. By 1063, he had subjugated most of the areas north of the River Duero, in an arc extending from Lisbon to Madrid to Barcelona on the Mediterranean coast. By the time he died in 1065, Ferdinand had forced the Muslim

principalities of Saragossa, Toledo, Seville and Badejoz into paying him tribute. But this was only the beginning. It was during the reign of his son Alfonso VI that the Christians made major advances. In Alfonso VI captured the ancient city of Toledo. The vast libraries and learning centers of this ancient capital fell into Christian hands. The intellectual stimulus from Toledo was the first in a series that was to liberate medieval Europe from its Dark Age.

The fall of Toledo set off a chain reaction. Europe was jubilant. Alarm bells rang through Muslim Spain. But the petty rivalries among the principalities made a concerted resistance to the Christian onslaught impossible. Meanwhile, the Murabitun revolution had swept through North Africa and was knocking on the doors of Spain. The purity of faith championed by the Murabitun struck a resonant chord with the Spanish Muslims. The Andalusian population was toiling under oppressive taxes levied by the emirs to support their own extravagant and lavish courts and to pay off the annual tribute to Christian marauders. The ulema realized that faith alone would provide the shield against the Crusaders. They gathered from all over Andalus in Seville and demanded that the emirs approach the Murabitun for help. In

1085, one year after the fall of Toledo, the emirs of Seville, Granada and Badejoz sent an emissary to Yusuf bin Tashfin asking him to intervene.

Yusuf bin Tashfin, the leader of the northern wing of the Murabitun movement, was well aware of the divisions among the rulers of Spain and was at first hesitant to enter the fray. But he was moved by the repeated pleas from the ulema. In 1086, he crossed the Straits with an army of 80,000 men. His Sinhaja, Berber and African troops were battle hardened after campaigns in North Africa and were animated by faith. Some of the troops came from as far south as Timbaktu and Gao. Ibn Khaldun records that the Murabitun followed the strategies taught by the Prophet at the Battle of Badr. They were fighting for faith and would not quit a battle until victory was achieved. The armies of Seville, Granada and Badejoz joined the Murabitun, swelling the ranks of the Muslim soldiers to over 150,000.

At the time, Alfonso VI and his Crusader knights were ravaging Saragossa in the north. Upon hearing of the arrival of the Murabitun, he turned around and the two armies met on the fields of Zallaqa, near Badejoz. Up until this time, the European knights had enjoyed the

advantage of heavy armor. But Yusuf had brought with him Turkish archers with their powerful Cossack bows. The African soldiers, armed with shields of hippo hide and long spears of steel, marched to the deafening sounds of African drums. The earth shook as the battle was engaged. The Crusaders suffered a crushing defeat with over 80,000 infantry and 20,000 cavalymen dead. Alfonso VI was himself wounded several times but managed to escape with his bodyguard in the darkness of night. After the victory, the Spanish emirs quarreled among themselves over the spoils of war. Disgusted, Yusuf bin Tashfin, withdrew into Morocco.

Alfonso VI turned to Christian Europe for help and within a year was back on the rampage again. His able lieutenant El Cid (from Arabic, ya sidi or alSyed), Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar held Saragosa and Valencia. Another of his knights, Garcia Jimenez, ravaged Muslim territories all the way into Seville. The Emir of Seville, the learned and cultivated al Mutamid, could not contain the Christians. In desperation, he turned once again to North Africa for help.

Yusuf bin Tashfin crossed into Spain a second time in 1089. The emirs of Seville, Granada, Malaga, Almeria, Murcia and Badejoz promised their support. Battle lines were drawn. El Cid joined up with Alfonso VI and advanced towards the Murabitun camp. But just before the engagement, quarrels broke out again among the emirs. Yusuf bin Tashfin had no desire to face the Crusaders with a divided camp and withdrew into Africa. This time, however, he made up his mind to depose the emirs and absorb Andalus into Murabitun territory.

In 1090, Yusuf bin Tashfin crossed into Spain a third time. His first act was to depose the emirs of Granada and Malaga who had deserted him at the hour of battle. Meanwhile, Al Mutamid, the emir of Seville, read the signs correctly that he was next in line for a Murabitun takeover. To preserve his emirate, he sought an alliance with Alfonso VI. However, the Murabitun intercepted this correspondence. Al Mutamid was deposed to North Africa along with his household. He died penniless in the city of Aghmat in the year 1095. He is best known in history as a great poet, whose expression of pathos in poetry presaged that of the last Moghul Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar of India by more than seven hundred years.



The Murabitun conquered Andalus as far north as Toledo and as far east as Barcelona. Alfonso VI and his Crusader knights suffered one defeat after another But El Cid continued to hold out against Yusuf bin Tashfin and blocked a major Murabitun advance up the Mediterranean coast. Yusuf bin Tashfin died in the year 1106. Alfonso VI died in the year 1109.

The confrontation between Yusuf bin Tashfin and Alfonso VI took place while the First Crusade raged in Palestine resulting in the fall of Jerusalem in 1099. The Murabitun represented an upsurge of faith amidst the corruption and laxity of 11th century Spain. They held the Andalusian peninsula for the Muslims for over a hundred years and were successful in pushing back the Crusaders beyond the Pyrenees Mountains into France. Were it not for the Murabitun, the fearless, veiled warriors from the womb of Africa, the Crusaders might well have inflicted far more damage to the Muslims of the eastern Mediterranean, in Syria, Egypt and Palestine. Yusuf bin Tashfin, as one of the architects of the Murabitun revolution, is celebrated as a key figure in the Islamic defense against the Spanish Crusades.

The Fall of Cordoba

The word “Crusades” immediately conjures up among Muslims visions of Jerusalem and Salahuddin. While Jerusalem was indeed the focus of the First Crusade, a broader view of this civilizational confrontation between medieval Christianity and Islam must include the events in Spain and North Africa. While the Muslims did hold their own in West Asia and recovered Jerusalem, Medieval Europe gained a decisive advantage in Spain and Portugal. This loss had a profound impact on the subsequent unfolding of global history.

Under the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba (929-1032), Spain had become a cultured, urbanized society and was a world leader in the development of art, science and culture. Urbanization led to the loss of the very qualities—courage, virility, energy, spirituality, leadership and solidarity that had helped it survive and prosper against the Christian threats from the north. Decay set in and the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba disintegrated in 1032. Spain split into several principalities—Saragossa, Toledo, Seville, Malaga, Granada, Almeria, Denia and Valencia, each ruled by a petty emir. The disintegration of the Umayyad Caliphate was a signal to the Christian Crusaders to expand their operations to the south. A free-for-all followed and in the end, Toledo the ancient Visigoth capital of Spain, fell to Alfonso VI of Castile in 1085.

The key to Andalus lay in North Africa. Muslim Spain continued to benefit from successive reformist movements in the Maghrib and from the infusion of new blood through the Berbers and the Slavic (Mamluke) bodyguards. In the 11th century the Murabitun revolution swept through northwest Africa and carried itself into the Andalusian peninsula. Murabitun intervention in Spain followed. Under Yusuf bin Tashfin, the Muslims regained much territory and re-established their rule over most of Andalus. However, events in North Africa once again profoundly influenced Spain. Following the loss of Jerusalem during the First Crusade (1099), new reformist movements arose in the Maghrib. The Al Muhaddithin displaced the Murabitun during the decade of 1130-1140 and established itself in

North Africa. The turbulence in the Maghrib was a signal to the Crusaders. Pope Eugene III declared a Second Crusade (1145-1146) with a three-pronged military thrust against Damascus in Syria, Tripoli in North Africa and Andalus in Europe. Damascus and Tripoli held but Lisbon (Arabic Hishbunah) fell and the Crusaders captured northern Portugal in 1145.

The Al Muhaddith held the Christians at bay for fifty years. Following the recapture of Jerusalem by Salahuddin (1187), there was an upsurge of military confidence and cohesiveness in the Muslim world. In the east, Muhammed Ghorî captured Delhi in 1192. In the west, the Al Muhaddith inflicted a crushing defeat on the Crusaders at the Battle of Alarcos in 1196. This cohesion, however, did not last. Soon after the Battle of Alarcos, North Africa was beset with further convulsions. In the first decade of the 13th century, petty emirates supplanted the Al Muhaddith in southern Morocco. As a result, the Al Muhaddith lost their supply of men and material from the African hinterland. The Christians were waiting for just this kind of opportunity. In 1212, the combined armies of Leon, Castile, Portugal and Aragon, reinforced by Crusaders from France and Germany, won a decisive victory over the Al Muhaddith at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.

The situation in Asia also took a turn for the worse. Genghiz Khan devastated Central Asia and Persia (1219-1222) and Baghdad itself was threatened. The destruction of the principal cities of Asia meant a significant dilution of the military capabilities of Muslims and their ability to help each other. Sensing an historic opportunity, the Christian powers openly sought an alliance with the Mongols against the Muslims. Representations were made to the Mongol Khan Kuyuk seeking such an alliance. John de Plano Carpini, a Franciscan, reached the Mongol capital Korakorum in 1245 and came back with promises of military help. While Genghiz Khan was devastating Samarqand and Bukhara, a German army invaded Egypt (1218-1221). The Muslim world was thus faced with a two-pronged invasion from a Mongol-Crusader axis. The onslaught was total, with the avowed intent of capturing Muslim lands and extirpating Islam.

After the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, Muslim political power in Andalus declined rapidly. The double hammer of Mongol devastations and Crusader invasions had taken its toll on the Muslim world. No help was forthcoming from the east to relieve the increasing pressure of the Crusaders. By 1230, Mongol horsemen were riding into eastern Anatolia

and knocking at the gates of Delhi. In Spain, political disintegration led to a free-for-all with local emirs seeking alliances with Christian powers against each other. The Crusaders were only too willing to provide military help in return for military cooperation against other Muslim princes. The principalities of Castile, Aragon and Portugal carved up what remained of Muslim Spain for assault and subjugation. Valencia was taken in 1200. The Balearic Islands in the western Mediterranean fell in 1230. Southern Portugal was lost in 1231. Cordoba, the seat of the Umayyad Caliphate fell in 1236. The conquest was complete with the fall of Seville in 1248. Only Granada remained in the hands of Ibn Ahmar, a prince of the Nasirid tribe from Saragossa who managed to retain his possessions only by becoming a vassal of Castile.

To grasp the full extent of the damage inflicted on the Islamic world one must juxtapose the events in Spain with those in Asia. Between 1219 and 1260, the Muslims lost more than half of their dominions. The lands that today constitute the states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Azerbaijan, Sinkiang, Persia, Afghanistan, western Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Georgia, Russia and the Caucasus were ravaged. Spain was occupied. Samarqand, Bukhara, Herat, Ghazna, Isfahan and Baghdad were destroyed. The Crusaders had formed a geopolitical alliance with the Mongols with the avowed intent of eliminating Islam. By the year 1260, the combined armies of the Mongols, the Crusaders and the Armenians stood at the gates of Jerusalem with only Egypt and Hejaz before them. The hour was dark indeed.



While the loss of Spain was a tragedy for the Muslims, it was of tremendous benefit to the Christians. It was through Spain and Sicily that Islamic learning, which had internalized and added to the wisdom of Greece, India and ancient Persia, was transmitted to Europe. One can chart out the intellectual transformation of Europe following the fall of Toledo (1085). In 1126, Archbishop Raymond established the School of Translation in Toledo. In 1132, Roger II invited Muslim scholars into Sicily. The famous geographer al Idrisi worked at the Sicilian court. In 1150 the University of Paris was founded and in 1167, the University of Oxford was established. Cambridge followed in 1200. In 1204 the Chartres Cathedral in France was completed. In 1215, the University of Salamanca was established. In 1258 Roger Bacon taught at Oxford. Thus it was that the learning that had been cultivated in Baghdad, Cairo and Samarkand was passed on to Christian Europe through Toledo and Palermo.

The loss of the Andalusian Peninsula was much more than a local military event. Until the expulsion of the Muslims in 1492, Europe was bottled up to the southwest. The conquest of Spain and Portugal freed up the energies of Europe and it was now poised to venture out into the Atlantic. Beyond the blue waters of the vast ocean lay the gold coast of Africa, the route to the Americas and the riches of the Indian Ocean. The loss of Andalus was to reverberate through the centuries in the European discovery of America, the slave trade from West Africa and the colonization of Asia.

The Fall of Granada

It is said among Muslims that the hills of El Pujarra around Granada still weep for the sound of the adhan every morning and the mosque of Cordoba stays awake all night waiting for the sajda of a single momin. To this day Andalus evokes among Muslims nostalgia for a golden age when the Iberian Peninsula resonated with the sound of prayer every morning and the name of Prophet Muhammed was honored every day. No other country was contested between Muslims and Christians as bitterly as was Spain. The struggle went on for 500 years. When the battles had ended and the last adhan was said from the ramparts of Granada in 1492, Muslims had lost the crown jewel of the Maghrib. Soon, they would be tortured and expelled, along with the Jews, from a land they considered the garden of the west. Their monuments were razed, their mosques destroyed, their libraries burned and their women were sent as slaves to the courts of Europe. It was a turning point, a milestone and an event that profoundly and fundamentally changed the flow of global events.

Granada did not fall in a single day, nor did its collapse come with a sudden stroke. Rather, it was the last breath of a decaying society, which had lost the capacity to defend itself against a sustained offensive from Christian Europe. Long before church bells replaced the call of the muezzin and Boabdil (Abu Abdallah, the last emir of Granada) stood on the hills of El Pujarra, looked down on his lost capital and wept, Spain had spent itself politically, militarily and culturally. There was warfare between competing emirs, intrigues within each dynasty pitting father against son, tension between the religious establishment and corrupt administrators, murder, mayhem and external aggression.

The surrender of Granada was only the final curtain in a drama that had played itself out.

The Maghrib was a vast area, which included the modern nations of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Sene-Gambia, Spain and Portugal. It was separated from Egypt and the Nile Delta by the Libyan Desert, from

Europe by the Pyrenees Mountains and from the Sudan by the great Saharan desert. The high Atlas, which branched off into the Andalusian Peninsula, tied together the topography of the region. The hinge for this geographic entity lay in Morocco. Andalus (Spain) and Ifriqiya (Tunisia) served as its extremities.

This vast region was inhabited by a diverse group of people. Andalus was a composite of Hispano-Muslims, Christians, Arabs and immigrants from North Africa. The Atlas Mountains were home to the Berbers. A sedentary Arab layer, resident primarily in the coastal cities, existed side by side with the Berbers. To the south, the historically important tribes of the Sanhaja, Zanata and Nafzawa roamed the pasturelands. Powerful tribes such as the Banu Hilal completed the landscape. The relative isolation of the Maghrib meant that this region had to face its political destiny on its own, more or less isolated from the rest of the Islamic world.

To understand the events of 1492, we must take an historical perspective of events dating back to the beginning of the 13th century. The Crusades in Palestine ended with the victory of Salahuddin at the Battle of Hittin (1186). This was also a period when Al Muhaddith power was at its zenith in the Maghrib. The Al Muhaddith Abu Yusuf won a major victory over the Crusaders at the Battle of Alarcos (1196). The Crusaders regrouped and came back with a vengeance. At the Battle of Las Novas de Tolosa (1212) a powerful army of the Crusaders overwhelmed the Al Muhaddith. The magnitude of this defeat can be understood from the sheer number of soldiers involved. Muslim chroniclers record that as many as 600,000 Al Muhaddith took part in the battle. Over 150,000 fell on the battlefield. When we consider that the entire population of the Maghrib at the time was about three million, it follows that practically every able-bodied man took part in the battle and one fourth of them lost their lives. The Al Muhaddith Emir al

Nasir who had assumed the title of Emir ul Muslimeen, returned distraught from the battle, locked himself up in his palace in Marrakesh and died soon thereafter (1213). Sensing an historic opportunity, Castile, Aragon and Portugal carved up Muslim Spain for conquest. The major towns were overrun one by one. In 1236, Cordoba, the capital of the Omayyad Caliphate in Spain, fell. Seville was lost in 1248. Only Granada remained. Muhammad Ibn Ahmar of the Nasirid dynasty, who had captured

Granada in 1238, managed to maintain his position by becoming a vassal of the Castilian monarch. Granada remained a vassal of Castile until 1333, when the Nasirid Emir Yusuf I, abrogated the annual tribute to Castile and made an attempt to carry the war into Christian territories.

In North Africa, the Al Muhaddith territories disintegrated into three emirates: the Merinides in Morocco, the Zayyanids in Algeria and the Hafsids in Tunisia. The Al Muhaddith capital of Marrakesh faded away and in its place sprang up three regional capitals—Meknes, capital of the Merinides; Tlemcen, capital of the Zayyanids; and Tunis, capital of the Hafsids. Nostalgia for the Al Muhaddith Empire was so great, that all three attempted at one time or the other to recreate an empire that included all of the Maghrib. The first to make an attempt were the Hafsids. In 1236, the Hafsid Emir Yahya I, claiming his descent from Omar ibn al Khattab, declared himself Emir ul Muslimeen. When he died, his son al Mustansir succeeded him.

Events in far away Baghdad presented an historic opportunity to al Mustansir. When Hulagu Khan occupied and destroyed Baghdad in 1258, the Islamic world looked to North Africa for leadership. For a brief period of one year, from 1260 to 1261, al Mustansir was recognized as the Caliph by the world of Islam. The Khutba was read in his name all over the Muslim world. The title was short lived because the Mamluke Sultan Baybars of Egypt resurrected the Abbasid Caliphate in Cairo in 1261, in part to provide an ideological boost to his troops who were on their way to Palestine in a desperate attempt to stop the Mongols at the Battle of Ayn Jalut (1261).

With the move of the Caliphate to Cairo, the center stage of Islamic history moved back east. Al Mustansir paid the price for his

Caliphate of one year. In 1260, Louis IX of France, in the mistaken belief that defeating al Mustansir would deal a deathblow to all Islam, invaded and briefly occupied the city of Tunis. During this period, there existed a de-facto alliance between the Crusaders and the Mongols to conquer the Muslim world. However, the numerous attempts of Louis IX to conquer North Africa were repelled and he died during a siege of Tunis in 1270.

The defeat at Las Novas de Tolosa (1212) was a result of several interrelated political, religious and economic factors. There was deep

distrust between the Spanish emirs and the Al Muhaddith of North Africa. This led to poor coordination on the battlefield. Within the Al Muhaddith court, there was infighting between the religious establishment and the vizier. The Al Muhaddith ulema had a running quarrel with the Grand Vizier Jami and demanded his removal. The detrimental effect of this quarrel can be appreciated from the structure of the Al Muhaddith court. The emir was the head of state. In the discharge of his responsibilities, he delegated the administrative and military affairs to the grand vizier and the judiciary affairs to the chief Kadi. A fight between the administrative-military wing and the judiciary wing was a disaster. In modern terminology, it is like two senior vice presidents of a corporation fighting with each other before launching a new product line. The economic condition of the empire was precarious. Inflation was rampant, which in turn led to corruption. On his way to Spain to fight the Christians in 1210, the Al Muhaddith Emir Al Nasir stopped off in Fez and Ceuta and had the governors of the two provinces beheaded for corruption. Lastly, the Al Muhaddith doctrines, heavily influenced by the Mu'tazilites, were deeply suspect in the eyes of the ulema, who tolerated the Al Muhaddith as a shield against the aggression of the Crusaders, but otherwise offered them no support.

For the next eighty years (1248-1328), a political equilibrium developed in the western Mediterranean involving Castile, Aragon and Portugal on the Christian side and the Merinides, Zayyanids, Hafsids and Granada on the Muslim side. The tribe of Banu Hilal in the south joined this fray from time to time. Political alliances shifted back and forth and it was not uncommon for a Muslim emir to side with a

Christian king against another emir, or for a Christian chief to support a Muslim against a fellow Christian. Meanwhile, the power struggle between the Merinides, the Zayyanids and the Hafsids continued. The Merinides gradually gained the upper hand over the other two. In 1269, the Merinide Yakub took Marrakesh and followed it up with the capture of Sijilmasa in 1274. Granada was under pressure from Castile and appealed to the Merinides for assistance. Yakub crossed over the Straits of Gibraltar and inflicted a defeat on the Christians at the Battle of Ecija in 1274. In 1279, the Merinide navy won a battle against a combined naval squadron of Castile and Portugal. While Yaqub was busy helping Granada, the Zayyanids were at the throat of the Hafsids. The emir of Granada, in a

thankless rebuff to the Merinides, joined forces with Castile and occupied the city of Tarifa in 1291. In 1295, the Granadans incited a revolt in Ceuta against the Merinides. Disgusted with the thankless emirs in Spain, the Merinide Yaqub turned his attention more towards North Africa. By 1307, he had conquered all of the Maghrib except the easternmost province of Ifriqiya (modern Tunisia).

The Merinides in Morocco reached their greatest strength under the Emirs Ali and Abu Inan (1331 to 1357). It was the Merinide Emir Abu Inan who was the patron of Ibn Batuta, the celebrated Muslim world traveler. There was a resurgence of Islamic solidarity in the Maghrib during this period. In 1340, the Moroccans (Merinides) defeated the Castilian navy and laid siege to Tarifa. For a change, there was close cooperation between Granada and the Merinides in Morocco. The Granadan Yusuf I cast off the Castilian yoke and turned to the Merinides across the Straits for support. However, in 1341, a Castilian force assisted by Crusaders from France, Italy and England defeated a combined force of Granadans and Merinides. This was an indication that the balance of power in the western Mediterranean had turned in favor of the Christians.

After the Crusades ended in Palestine (circa 1190), the balance of power in the Mediterranean moved counter clockwise, with the Turks advancing upon Anatolia and southeastern Europe while the Christians gained the upper hand in Spain and North Africa. The Spaniards, sensing blood, followed up their victory with the capture of Algeciras (in Morocco) in 1244. Emir Ali was hampered in his efforts at the consolidation of the Maghrib by two factors. The first was the Black Plague, which engulfed his kingdom much as it did West Asia and Europe (1346-1360), causing widespread death and economic dislocation and the second, the recurrent uprisings of the Banu Hilal tribe. Four year later, the Banu Hilal at the Battle of Kairouan defeated Emir Ali himself and his dream of a Maghribi Empire came to an end.

Events now flowed inexorably in favor of the Crusaders. In 1355, the Genoese briefly occupied Tripoli (Libya). In 1390, the French attacked Mahdiya (Tunisia). In 1399, Tetuan (Morocco) was sacked by Castile. In 1415, Ceuta (Morocco) was captured by Portugal. One may juxtapose these losses with the Ottoman victories in Europe where Bayazid I defeated the Serbs at the Battle of Kosova (1389), captured Serbia, Bosnia, Albania,

Skopje and smashed a combined Crusader army at the Battle of Nicopolis (1396). With both Ceuta and Algeciras in the hands of the Christians, communications between Granada and Morocco across the Straits of Gibraltar were cut. The noose around Granada tightened.

Historians have pondered over the decay and disintegration of the Maghrib in the 14th and 15th centuries. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) lived through this period of instability in North Africa. Born in Tunis, which was at that time a part of the Hafsid Emirate known as Ifriqiya, Ibn Khaldun had an opportunity to travel widely in the Maghrib and witness first hand the mechanics of the rise and fall of local dynasties. Much of his youth was spent in North Africa. In later years, he migrated to Egypt, where he served as an ambassador and advisor to the Mamlukes. It was Ibn Khaldun who was given charge by the Mamlukes to negotiate the surrender of the city of Damascus to Timurlane in 1400.

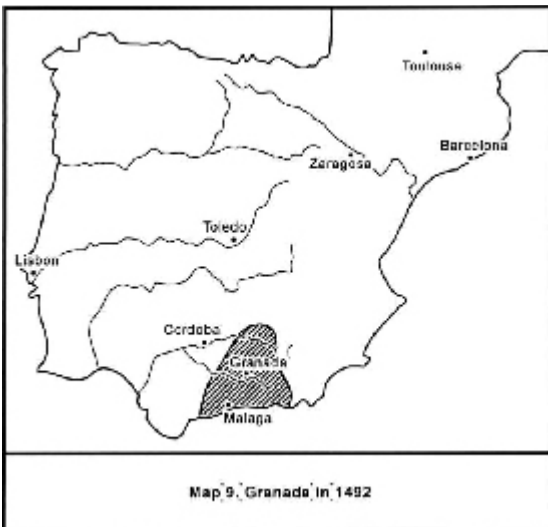
Ibn Khaldun is justly regarded as the father of sociology and the philosophy of history. He was the first to advance a general theory of the rise and fall of civilizations, which he based on his observations of the Maghrib. According to him, there is always a state of tension between the nomads and the city dwellers. History moves forward in the resolution of this tension. The nomads possess in abundance the quality of asabiyah, which in a general sense means group feeling and group loyalty. By contrast, city life tends to dilute and destroy group feeling. According to Ibn Khaldun power is political. Asabiyah fosters political and military unity and enables the nomads to overcome the sedentary city dwellers. In time, the nomads themselves settle down and become city dwellers and in turn are overcome by a new wave of nomads. Asabiyah thus becomes the key to political power and the building block of nations and empires. It is the glue, the cement that binds people together and demands and obtains the sacrifice of individuals for monumental tasks. When asabiyah is diluted or destroyed, civilizations lose the glue that holds them together and they disintegrate.

This theory is widely used as a model to explain the rise and fall of civilizations. However, Ibn Khaldun's ideas present enormous difficulties from an Islamic perspective. Islam is against asabiyah based on race, color or national origin ("We made you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize and know each other—not that you may despise each other" Qur'an, 49:13). Islam seeks to create a global community "enjoining what

is noble, forbidding what is wrong and believing only in Allah”. Such a community transcends the asabiyah based on race, region or national origin and embraces all nations.

While it is true, as Ibn Khaldun maintains, that asabiyah enables common people to achieve uncommon results and build nations and empires, it is also true that nations built on asabiyah are by nature aggressive and expansive. They become predatory on their neighbors and foster feelings of superiority over other nations and tribes. Hitler’s Germany offers an example. The Nazis built a nation-state based on German asabiyah—nationalism based on the superiority of the German race over other races. This enabled them, temporarily, to dominate Europe. But Nazi Germany collapsed, in part because other nation states would not accept German ascendancy. In a philosophical sense, asabiyah frees the individual from his or her ego and places the walls of egocentric exclusion at the national or racial boundary. The prison of race, tribe, or nation replaces the prison of the ego.

Islam, by contrast, liberates humankind not only from the individual ego, but also from the prison of racism, tribalism and nationalism. The outward limits of the Islamic civilization are set at the global community. All races, tribes and nations are included in this civilization. The most difficult issue with the philosophy of Ibn Khaldun is that it offers no prospect of internal renewal. When a tribe or nation settles down and softens up, enjoying the pleasures of city life, must it necessarily yield to another group, which has a higher degree of group feeling? This is contrary to observation.



The universal religions of the world provide the possibility of self-renewal. Islam provides for the renewal of individuals and nations from within. Individuals and nations do decay through their own folly and by Divine Grace they renew themselves and rise up once again. Islamic history is animated by this recurrent theme of renewal. The appearance of a reformer at the turn of each century is expected by a large majority of Muslims in the world. Century after century, from the Al Muhaddith of the Maghrib to Uthman dan Fuduye of Nigeria and the Mahdi of the Sudan, one sees this recurrent attempt at renewal of Islamic life and a regeneration of Islamic civilization. It is the possibility of renewal that animates the collective efforts of Muslims.

The reasons for the fall of Granada were demographic, economic, cultural, religious and ideological. The continuous wars in Andalus sapped the manpower of the entire Maghrib. The Crusades were a civilizational conflict wherein Europe hurled itself again and again at the Islamic world for almost five hundred years. The battle lines extended from the Andalusian peninsula across North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Anatolia and Sicily into southeastern Europe. Andalus provided a complex problem for Maghribi rulers. Any ruler, whether Merinide or Hafsid, who coveted the leadership of the Maghrib and desired the title of Emir ul Muslimeen, was duty bound to defend Andalus against the Christians. Andalus was like quicksand. The politics of the Iberian Peninsula was shift. The Muslim Andalusians had lost the capacity to defend themselves and had come to

depend upon soldiers from North Africa. Even after the defeat of Rio Solado (1341), when the North Africans finally turned their back on Andalus, the court of Granada continued to depend on soldiers from Africa. The Maghribi manhood bled. What was not lost on the battlefield was destroyed by disease. The Black Plague of 1346-1360 hit North Africa particularly hard. Entire villages were destroyed. Politics and culture both suffered. In 1360, most of the Crusader army led by Louis IX of France perished from the Black Plague at the gates of Tunis.

Agricultural production was a casualty of the drop in population. When food production dropped, many of the settled tribes became nomads. This in turn had an impact on state revenues. The drop in agricultural revenues and the cost of continuous wars in Andalus squeezed the treasuries of the Maghrib. Initially, during the Murabitun and Al Muhaddith periods (1050-1212), the accumulated wealth of Andalus had paid for the wars. But as the bulk of the Andalusian peninsula fell to the Christians (1085-1248), the source of this wealth also disappeared. A poorer Maghrib could not sustain a standing army.

Political centralization requires capital, because capital is required to pay for a standing army, which provides cohesion for a large political entity. With the Maghrib in economic decline, fragmentation set in.

When the wealth of Andalus was exhausted, the emirs of the Maghrib turned to trade with the city-states of Italy for their tax revenues. The Al Muhaddith had signed a trade concession with Genoa in 1168. In 1236, the Hafsids entered into a treaty with Venice and Genoa. In 1265, al Mustansir of the Hafsids gave special privileges to the French and the Sicilians. Unfortunately, this trade, while it brought prosperity to a few rich merchants on the coast, further eroded the political authority of the emirs because they were now dependent on the merchant elite for their revenues. The Genoese often acted as spies for their fellow Christian Spaniards, providing them military, political and social intelligence, which was of enormous benefit to the Crusaders. The southerly trade routes across the Sahara to the Sudan were still active but they shifted between the western

route through Sijilmasa and a more central route through Ghat and Kairouan, depending on the safety of the routes.

There was a silver lining to the dark clouds. The political fragmentation of the Maghrib and the emergence of competing emirates provided a haven for scholars and men of the arts. On the surface, culture flourished (1250-1350). But this was a culture borrowed from Andalus, sustained by the influx of refugees who were driven out by the Crusaders. Culture must have roots in the soil for it to provide the foundation of a civilization. A borrowed culture is like a tree without roots; a mere whiff of wind will knock it down. When Andalus fell, along with it disappeared the culture of North Africa. Furthermore, the influence of the Spanish refugees was not always positive. The Andalusians were more secular in their thinking than the North Africans. Perhaps, it was a result of their cosmopolitan culture wherein Muslims, Christians and Jews all participated. The immigrants tended to look upon politics as separate from its ethical foundation. They were often involved in the intrigues of the Merinide and Hafsid courts and tended to depend for their survival on playing off the North African courts against the powerful Banu Hilal tribe.

The most important reason for the fragmentation of the Maghrib—and the loss of Andalus—was the loss of legitimacy of rule. Legitimacy is a central issue that has haunted Islamic history since the assassinations of Uthman and Ali. A ruler and a system of government that is accepted as legitimate elicits its support from the people. Such support is essential to building a civilization. Conversely, rule that is considered illegitimate is constantly challenged and can only be sustained by force. This was well understood by the Shi'a Fatimids, the Sunni Murabitun and the Mu'tazilite Al Muhaddith. Each of these dynasties packaged their appeal in religious terminology and sought their legitimacy in an Islamic framework. Thus the Fatimids claimed their descent from Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Murabitun claimed an orthodox reformation against the excesses of the Fatimids and Kharijites and the Al Muhaddith claimed a rational basis for rule based on reason and consensus.

The disappearance of a centralized empire in the Maghrib made the issue of political legitimacy particularly acute. The emirs were unsuccessful in expressing their legitimacy in religious terms, as had the Fatimids, the Murabitun and the Al Muhaddith. Politics became increasingly separated

from religion. The divergence of politics from religious ethics was at the core of the loss of Andalus. The regional courts became a paradise for sycophants. Historians wrote and poets sang in glorious verse of their patron emirs whenever they won a small skirmish or built a minor monument. Gone was the grand idea of building a universal Islamic community in the Maghrib.

Great efforts spring forth from great ideas. Only faith in a superordinate idea can demand and obtain the willing sacrifice that is the basis of great efforts. Without an idea that transcends individual egos, great collective achievements are not possible. Without a superordinate vision, the masses are like wild fires that burn everything in front of them. But when they are held together by a common idea, they are like a powerful laser beam that inscribes its edict on the edifice of history. Ideas are the glue, the cement, the force and the power that hold people together. They form the basis, the foundation of a civilization.

At the core of Islam is the idea of Tawhid, which liberates the individual from his egotistical prison and propels him into a universal mold. Tawhid implies a God-centered civilization, wherein culture, art, politics and sociology all spring from their focus on the omnipresence of God. The Muslims lost their bearing in history when they lost their focus on Tawhid. Legitimacy of rule then became an item of convenience, to be bestowed upon whoever held the big stick. The rulers, the soldiers, the merchants, the writers and the ulema all shared this guilt. The kadis and religious scholars in the Maghrib went along with the divestiture of religion from politics, preaching the Friday Khutba in the name of whoever was in power. Only after Al Muhaddith power had disintegrated did the orthodox vision of Islam find its place in the sun, but by then the center of gravity of world history had moved away from the Maghrib.

It is useful to compare the historical experience of the Maliki School, which is most widely practiced in the Maghrib, with the experience of the Hanafi School in Asia. The children of Islam constructed similar but different historical edifices using the spiritual and intellectual material left by Imam Abu Haneefa and Imam Malik. The comparative latitude provided by Imam Abu Haneefa in the school of Fiqh named after him provided the Muslims of Asia the tools to adapt and grow with the tides of history. The Turks adapted the Hanafi School and when Fatimid power challenged the

Abbasids in the 10th century, the Turks became champions of the Abbasid Caliphate and its protectors. The Seljuks and the Ghaznavids alike fought the Fatimids to the blade, in places as far away as Multan (Pakistan) and Baghdad (Iraq). More importantly, the Hanafis showed a remarkable ability to assimilate great ideas as they emerged out of the ideological conflicts of the 9th and 10th centuries. Thus, when the Asharites carried the day against the Mu'tazilites (10th century), Asharite influence melted into Hanafi Asia. The ideas of Al Ghazzali (d. 1111) were absorbed with equal ease. When the Mongol eruption came (1219-1301) and much of Asia lay in ruins, sufi ideas triumphed, Islam became more spiritual and sufi ideas also became a part of the Hanafi milieu. Thus the Islam that emerged by the 16th century, when the Safavid and Moghul dynasties were founded and the Ottomans were at the zenith of their power, was an amalgam of the great ideas that had flowed from Madina, Kufa,

Baghdad, Bukhara and Samarqand. Out of this amalgam came the giants of the ages, personages like Ghazzali, Hafiz, Rumi, Abdul Qader Jeelani, Moeenuddin Chisti, Bahauddin Naqshband, Ahmed Sirhindi, Shah Waliulla and Muhammed Iqbal. And it is this amalgamated folk Islam that is practiced by Turks, Pakistanis, Iranis, Indians, Bengalis and Central Asians today.

The experience of the Maliki Maghrib was different. For three long centuries, the Maliki School took a back seat to Fatimid, Murabitun and Al Muhaddith ideologies. When it did express itself freely after 1230, political power had slipped from the Maghrib and the military-political initiative in that region had passed on to the Portuguese and the Spaniards and then after a brief interlude of Ottoman protection, to the French and the Italians. When the Maghribi Muslims did accept sufi ideas in the 14th century, it was out of necessity to protect themselves against the onslaught of the Europeans. The Maliki Maghrib did not experience the amalgamation and evolution of ideas that was experienced by Asia. This explains why political, social and cultural fragmentation proceeded so rapidly in the Maghrib during the 14th and the 15th centuries.

Events in the Maghrib moved rapidly after the Turks captured Istanbul in 1453. Pope Nicholas V called for a new Crusade. On the eastern front, the rising tide of Turkish power was more than a match for the combined power of Europe. But in the west, it was a different story. In 1458, the Portuguese

occupied the important fortress of Al Qasr and used it as a base to attack Morocco all across the Atlantic coast. In 1469, Tangier was lost to the Portuguese. By 1471, the Merinides had disappeared from Morocco and the region was in disarray. This general fragmentation explains the inability of the North Africans to come to the aid of Granada. In 1469, at the behest of the Pope, Isabella of Aragon married Ferdinand of Castile and the Spanish state was born. Abul Hassan Ali, a capable, brave and chivalrous emir, ruled Granada at the time. At other times, he might have left his imprint on Spanish history. But his court was ravaged by internal dissensions and intrigues so characteristic of the Maghrib of the time. In 1482, Ferdinand attacked Alhama, a city located about twenty miles from the city of Granada. Abul Hassan bravely defended the city, but had to abandon it when news reached him of the rebellion of his son Abu Abdullah, named Boabdil by the Spaniards. Abu Abdullah had none of the courage, stamina and integrity of his father. A battle between father and son left the forces of Granada weak and vulnerable. Malaga fell in 1483. As the Castilians approached the capital city, the brother of Abul Hassan, Az Zaghal, offered valiant and stout resistance, but was constantly thwarted by Boabdil. In 1489 the city of Safar fell. Having destroyed the territories around Granada, Ferdinand retired to Cordoba, there to raise an army of 80,000 for a final assault on Granada. In 1490, he returned at the head of this host, built a city of siege called Santa Fe (Holy Faith) and cut all lines of communication between Granada and the outside world. Resistance was desperate, but faced with starvation Granada surrendered on January 3, 1492.

The cross displaced the crescent in the once mighty Omayyad province of Andalus. An Empire died and a new Empire was born. The terms of surrender guaranteed freedom of worship and the right to emigrate. But within six years, the treaty was abandoned and the Inquisition was unleashed with all its fury upon the hapless population under the direction of the cruel Bishop Jimenez. The Jews had already been expelled in 1492. It was now the turn of the Muslims. They were given the option of either converting to Christianity or being banished to North Africa. Those who were caught saying the shahada were hanged from their tongues. Water was cut off from Muslim homes so that they could not do their wudu before prayer. Children were forcibly inducted into Catholic schools. The wives of the believers were sold as slaves in Europe. Faced with this oppression, the Muslims of Granada offered what little resistance they could. There were a

series of uprisings (1496, 1501, 1568, 1609), each of which was put down with ruthless cruelty. Finally, in 1609, the last of the Muslims boarded a decrepit boat and set sail for Morocco. The curtain fell on Muslim Andalusia. The roster of immigrants into America on board the early ships arriving from Seville contains the names of many Muslim men and women.

ISLAM IN AFRICA

Summary

Islam entered Africa when the Prophet Muhammed sent a group of Companions to Ethiopia to escape the oppression of the pagan Meccans. In the succeeding centuries Islam swept through Egypt and North Africa during the Omayyad period and penetrated the Sudan and the Sahel through trade, commerce and intermarriage. In the process, it transformed African societies, giving them a universal creed, a Divine Law and membership in a global community. The great empires of Mali and Songhay rose, cemented by the creed of Islam and centers of learning like Timbaktu, Gao and Jenin rose along the Niger River. The Sahel became a part of the prosperous trading bloc in the Indian Ocean extending from Shofala in southern Africa to Malacca in Malaysia. Egypt grew to be a center of Islamic civilization while the Maghrib became a prime mover in the destiny of the world of Islam.

Introduction of Islam into Africa

Africa, alone among the continents, has a majority Muslim population. Africa gave the Islamic world its first muezzin, Bilal ibn Rabah. It was home to its greatest historian, Ibn Khaldun and the birthplace of its best-known traveler, Ibn Batuta. It produced one of its few genuine mass movements, the Murabitun movement and provided the manpower for the injection of Muslim political military power into southwestern Europe. It bankrolled the Muslim world with treasures of gold in its historic struggles with the Crusaders and the Mongols and enriched Europe and Asia alike with its human energy and its rich heritage of music, art, culture and history. Yet, it is astonishing how little attention is paid to the history of Muslims in Africa. At best, Africa—along with Indonesia and China—receives a marginal treatment from Muslim historians. It is almost as if Africa is a footnote to West Asia. This is all the more surprising considering that 250 million Muslims, constituting almost twenty percent of all Muslims in the world, live in Africa, while another 250 million live in Indonesia, Malaysia and China.

One may advance several reasons for this neglect. Oriental scholarship is focused on the Middle Eastern character of Islam, embracing primarily the Arab element and including as a corollary the Turkish and Persian elements. In the larger context, African Muslim history suffers from the same neglect that characterizes Africa in general. One may legitimately infer that European denial of African history is in part a deliberate attempt to deny the African his historical past, which was not less brilliant than that of medieval Europe. How else could one justify the Trans-Atlantic slave trade that lasted more than three hundred years and resulted in the forced shipment of a hundred million men, women and children? To enslave a continent one has to first dehumanize it. Until recent times, Africa was referred to as “the dark continent”, bereft of historical or civilizational achievements. Muslim scholarship, aping the West during the colonial era, went along with this

denial. Only now is the historical contribution of African Muslims to Islamic history receiving the attention it so richly deserves.

Africa is a vast continent, second only to Asia in size and five times the size of Europe. It is home to the most desolate deserts and it has some of the thickest forests. The great expanse of the Sahara separates the Mediterranean world from the rest of Africa. The Nile snakes through the eastern desert, giving life to a narrow patch of green, sustaining more than eighty million people in Egypt and the Sudan. West of Egypt lies the great Libyan Desert, uninhabitable except for a narrow strip close to the Mediterranean. The Atlas Mountains cover the northwestern territories embracing Algeria and Morocco and protrude into Spain. South of Mediterranean Africa, extending in a broad swath is the Sahara, the largest and the harshest desert on planet earth. It occupies an area of more than three million square miles, almost the size of the United States. Only a few well-defined trade routes traverse this vast terrain, providing civilizational links between the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa. The modern states of Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Niger, Chad, Libya, Egypt and northern Sudan lie partly or wholly in the Sahara.

South of the Sahara lies an equally expansive swath of grassland and agricultural land watered by the great rivers, the Niger and Senegal in the west and the Nile and its tributaries in the east. This area, which is also the size of the United States, is the historical Sudan. Today, this territory is occupied by the modern states of Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Upper Volta, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. The reader should not confuse historical Sudan with the modern state of Sudan, which lies south of Egypt.

Historical Sudan is a much larger area embracing the entire territory south of the Sahara from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. East of the Ethiopian highlands, the terrain once again changes to the Somali pastures and desert. As one traverses southward towards the equator, the grasslands change to dense forest. These forests are a few hundred miles deep in western Africa but grow to a dense patch of impassable territory in the Congo basin extending through Zaire, Kenya and Uganda. The forests, until recent times, defined the limit of civilizational influence from the Mediterranean and from the coastline along the Indian Ocean. South of the

equator lies southern Africa, which changes gradually from bush land to pastures and agricultural territory towards the modern state of South Africa.

The history of Africa is strongly influenced by its geography and its topography. Egypt, situated at the confluence of Asia and Africa, is a child of the Nile. From the time of the Pharaohs, the Nile valley has provided political, cultural and social unity to the area. The fellaheen of the Nile constitute the oldest continuous cultural unit in the world. Egypt also acted as the conduit for African art, science and culture to the rest of the world. Specifically, the development of Greek thought in the eastern Mediterranean in the fifth century BC owes a great deal to the wisdom of Africa. Egypt belongs to the Mediterranean world and is the doorway to North Africa. It sits astride an axis linking the Mediterranean civilizations with the civilizations of the Indian Ocean. It provides a bridgehead to Asia and its historical influence extends into the Syrian highlands. In turn, Egypt has attracted the attention of Asian conquerors, as happened in the Persian invasion of the sixth century BC, the Roman invasion of the first century BC, the Arab-Islamic invasion of the 7th century and the attempted Mongol-Crusader invasions of the 13th century.

In the Maghrib, the Atlas Mountains are inhabited by the Berbers, a hardy, independent people who have resisted foreign rule through the centuries. Land and sea trade routes interconnect the Mediterranean lands. Ancient empires welded them into a common dominion. The Maghrib, as well as Egypt, was part of the Roman Empire. In the 7th century, as Umayyad armies raced across Asia, Africa and Europe, all of these territories came under the sway of the Islamic Empire. Initially, each of these empires established their presence in fortified towns along the coast, whereas the people of the interior largely remained untouched. Consequently, a certain tension between the settled city population and the pastoral nomadic population of the hinterland has always existed in the Maghrib. In the classical Islamic era (700-1250), the Maghrib held the key to Spain and southwestern Europe. When the Berbers were supportive, Muslim armies advanced into Spain and France. When there were disturbances in the Atlas Mountains, the advance stopped or there was a retreat. In the 11th and 12th centuries, it was the turbulence in the Maghrib that largely determined the fate of Muslim Spain.

Diverse peoples, each with its own rich history, inhabit the grasslands, steppes and agricultural areas of the Sudan belt. In centuries bygone, the proud and independent Tuaregs acted as a conduit between the Maghrib and the western Sudan. Further south are the Soninke, Wolof and Mandinka of Sene-Gambia; the Bambara, Fulbe and Mossi of the western Niger basin; the powerful Hausa-Fulani of northern Nigeria; the Kanuri, Shuwa, Sara of eastern Nigeria and Cameroon and, the Bagrami of the Chad region.

The Sudan belt is connected to the Mediterranean by caravan trade routes. From ancient times, five broad routes are identifiable. The first one leads from Morocco through Marrakesh towards Mauritania and Sene-Gambia. The second one starts from Dudja in eastern Morocco through Bechar in western Algeria and ends in the ancient cultural center of Timbaktu in Mali. The third leads from Algiers and Biskra through Tamanrasset in Algeria to Agadez in Niger and ultimately Kano in Nigeria. The fourth is an east-west route connecting the commercially important Niger River basin through Kano in northern Nigeria, Ndjamina in Chad to Al Ubayyid in modern Sudan and ultimately to the Red Sea. The fifth one connects Yemen and Hejaz through the Red Sea to Ethiopia. There were also continuous trade contacts from ancient times between Oman and the Persian Gulf regions with the East African shores.

These trade routes were the conduits not only for a two-way exchange of men and material, but also ideas. One such sublime idea was the idea of Islam. Africa was in the cradle of Islam. Among the most honored companions of Prophet Muhammed was Bilal ibn Rabah, the first muezzin of Islam. The proximity of Hejaz to Abyssinia ensured continuous contacts between Africans and the Arabs of Mecca. When enmity of the pagan Arabs to the mission of Islam was at its height, the Prophet ordered some of his Companions to migrate to Abyssinia. Several waves of believers did migrate (circa 620) and were received with honor by the Negus, King of Abyssinia. These émigrés returned to Mecca when peace was established between the Muslims and the pagans, but contacts continued and the highlands of Ethiopia were the first in Africa to hear the call of Islam.

According to oral traditions in western Africa, some of the descendants of Bilal ibn Rabah migrated to Mallel, the Arabic name for Mali. Specifically, the Mandinka clan Keita, which is generally credited with founding the great Mali Empire, claims its descent from Bilal ibn Rabah,

referred to as Bilali Bunamah in the Mandinka language. Tradition also has it that some of the Companions of the Prophet migrated to Libya and from there to the Lake Chad area further south. Such migrations would be in keeping with the exhortation of the Prophet to his Companions to go forth and spread the message of Islam in the far reaches of the world. Much of the history of early Africa is oral and there is no reason to doubt that African migrants from Mecca established contact with and settled down in the developed regions of West Africa.

The Muslims took Egypt and Libya from the Byzantine Empire in 642. Islam transformed and uplifted the decaying Byzantine civilization in Egypt, imparted to it a transcendence based on Tawhid, so that the land of the Nile became a cradle of the nascent Islamic civilization. Within forty years of the conquest of Egypt, Umayyad armies had reached the Atlantic Ocean. Uqba bin Nafi, the conqueror of the Maghrib, founded the city of Kairouan (circa 670), in modern Tunisia. According to some accounts, Uqba bin Nafi led an expedition towards Mauritania. The Kunta tribe of Sene-Gambia, claim their descent from Uqba bin Nafi. The Kuntas are a distinguished tribe of learned men who in the course of time produced great scholars like Sidi Muhammed al Kunti who had a profound impact on the introduction of Islam into West Africa. Sidi Muhammed's son Sidi al Bakkai introduced the Qadariya order into West Africa in the 15th century. The Qadariya Order, founded by Abdul Qader Jeelani (1077-1166) of Baghdad, was a major force in the spread of Islam in Africa, India, Pakistan, Central Asia and southeastern Europe. Towards the end of 19th century, another great African, Uthman Dan Fuduye, inspired by the ideas of Sidi Muhammed and of the Qadariya School, waged a valiant struggle for Islam in West Africa.

Kairouan soon grew into an important trade center and a magnet for scholars. Large caravans passed through this city carrying goods from the Sudan, the Maghrib and Spain to Egypt and returned loaded with imports from Persia, Khorasan, India and beyond. More significant was the traffic to the cities of Mecca and Madina for the Hajj. As we have pointed out in earlier chapters Madina was the center for the Maliki School of Fiqh. It was natural that Maliki scholars, attracted by the prosperity of Kairouan and of the Spanish cities, moved to North Africa. Some of these scholars accompanied the trade caravans south of the Sahara to the Sudan belt. Thus

it was that the radiance from Mecca reached West Africa and the Maliki School of Fiqh came to be the accepted school throughout West Africa, the Maghrib and Spain. For the last thousand years, Islamic jurisprudence of the Maliki School, together with the institution of Hajj, has provided a vital civilizational link between West Africa and the rest of the Muslim world.

Mutual trade interests between the Umayyads who controlled the Maghrib and the kingdom of Ghana (not to be confused with the modern state of Ghana, the ancient kingdom of Ghana was centered around southern Mali) helped the flow of merchants and merchandise. Ghana controlled the gold mines to the south and as trade increased, it required an increasing supply of gold. The Omayyads, as well as successor kingdoms in the Maghrib, saw to it that trade routes were protected. They established trade centers along the caravan routes to enhance the flow of goods and ensure the safety of merchants. The primary export of West Africa was gold. Other products included salt, ivory and kola nuts. In return, the North Africans provided religious and administrative services and brought in horses from North Africa, spices from Asia and books of learning from Kairouan, Baghdad and Bukhara. Slave trade was not a principal element in the Arab-African transactions, as is sometimes claimed by European writers. It was much later in the 17th and 18th centuries that Omani merchants competed with the Europeans for slaves in the Bantu areas of East Africa.

It was trade, more than any expedition or migration of Arabs that firmly established Islam in West Africa. Among the important trading centers were Tahert in Algeria, Sijilmasa in Morocco, Tanderi in Mali and Agadez in Niger. These caravan routes were connected to the rich commercial towns in the Sene-Gambia and Niger basins as well as Lake Chad. The Sanhaja who inhabited the Sahara acted as escorts to the trade caravans and were the first to accept Islam as early as the Omayyad period in the 8th century. In the Sene-Gambia and Niger River basins, local merchants, noblemen and chieftains led the introduction of Islam. Several reasons may be advanced for this. The merchants were obviously impressed with the business ethics as well as the contractual laws in the Shariah. The noblemen and the chieftains could draw upon the administrative and organizational talents of Muslims. But more important, Islam provided a universal creed and a universal community wherein all believers were equal. By the 9th century,

important Muslim centers existed in the cities of Gao, Ghana and Tekrur. By the 10th century, the rulers of Gao had accepted Islam. By the 11th century, the kings of the powerful state of Ghana had themselves become Muslim. The intrinsic spirituality of traditional African cultures helped the early spread of Islam, which arrived on the scene proclaiming that it was *deen ul fitra*, or the natural religion of humankind sent to remind all nations of the pristine relationship between man and the One Omniscient Divine.

The presence of a vibrant Islamic community in West Africa acted as a catalyst for social and political movements in the Maghrib and the Sudan. In the first half of the 11th century, the Murabitun rose from the steppes of West Africa to dominate all of the Maghrib and Spain. They established *ribats*, which were a combination of fortresses, *madrasahs* and spiritual training centers, in the Mauritania-Morocco region. By 1150, these *ribats* had coalesced into a centralized political authority and produced a mass movement, which displaced the fading Omayyad dynasty in Spain and the decaying Fatimids of North Africa. As late as the 19th century, Islam provided the motivating force for internal reform and resistance to European colonization in West Africa. The work of Uthman Dan Fuduye (d. 1817) established the Sokoto Caliphate and provided inspiration to slave revolts as far away as Jamaica.

The introduction of Islam into East Africa followed a somewhat different path from that in West Africa. East Africa includes a broad swath of territory embracing the modern nations of Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. Of the 100 million people who live in that region today, approximately 40% are Muslim.

Since pre-Islamic times, East Africa was known to the Arabs as the land of the Zanj and was a part of the large and prosperous Indian Ocean trade zone that linked India, China, Persia, Arabia and the eastern shores of Africa. China exported porcelain. From India came fine cotton. The products from the Persian Gulf included silk and manufactured goods while Yemen exported incense and horses. African exports included ivory, gold, animal skins, ambergris and rice. Dotting the coastline of the Indian Ocean were large and small trading centers extending in an arc from the tip of Africa to the Straits of Malacca. Included among these were the East African cities of Mombasa, Pemba, Kilwa and Shofala.

Islam was introduced into East Africa as early as the 7th century by successive waves of refugees from Arabia. The first group arrived in the year 698 fleeing the persecution of the Omayyad governor of Iraq, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Shortly thereafter, a second group arrived, led by the Kharijites Sulayman and Saeed, whose revolt against the Caliph Abdul Malik had failed. Sulayman established an Ibadi state at Lamu, just north of Mombasa, in modern Kenya. More migrations followed as the persecution of dissidents in the Omayyad Caliphate increased. In the year 729, after a particularly harsh crack down on the Shi'a community, there was a substantial migration of Shi'as to Mombasa. After the Abbasid revolution of 750, as the Omayyads were hunted down and killed, it was the turn of the Omayyads to flee and seek refuge in Africa. In 908 several thousand Iraqis, fleeing the destructions caused by the Karamatians, arrived in Somalia and built for themselves the new towns of Barawah and Shakah.

Following the Seljuk invasions of the 11th century, there were substantial social dislocations in Persia. To escape the ravages of war, some Persians moved further west towards Anatolia but some migrated to East Africa. Most of those fleeing the political turmoil in Iraq and Persia were men. In East Africa they intermarried with the local Bantu ladies, creating a rich Arab-Persian-Bantu amalgam and a vibrant Swahili (meaning, coastal) culture. It was from this matrix that the powerful Swahili dynasties of the 13th and 14th centuries arose.

Early in the 12th century, the Swahilis founded a state with its capital at Kilwa. By the turn of the century, this state had expanded to include the entire coastline from Zanzibar to Shofala. To the interior it extended its borders to the Zambezi River including the gold mines in Zimbabwe and Manika. Gold and trade brought prosperity to the land attracting immigrants both from Yemen and the African hinterland. New towns such as Titi and Sunnah grew up to cater to the gold trade.

In the 13th century, Oman emerged as a strong naval power in the western Indian Ocean. The Omanis captured the southern coastline of the Arabian Peninsula, including Yemen, and extended their influence to the Sahel. In 1303 the Omani Sultan Suleyman shifted his capital from Oman to Batah in Kenya. For the next 500 years, the history of the Sahel was inextricably linked with that of Oman and the Persian Gulf.

Among the refugees from Arabia and Persia were many ulema. The influx of scholars, merchants and refugees planted the seeds of the new Islamic community. The Shariah provided the basis for commercial transactions. The Shafi'i fiqh, practiced in southern Arabia, took hold in East Africa. The community grew as conversion of the Bantus gathered momentum through intermarriage. In the 13th century, as Islam spread on the wing of tasawwuf beyond its Arab-Persian heartland, sufi zawiyas were also established in East Africa. The global network of zawiyas added stability to the newborn communities and facilitated the movement of merchant and scholar alike, furthering the growth of Islam. The melting of Arab, Persian and Bantu elements produced a new language, Swahili, which was written in the Arabic script and had a rich vocabulary of Arabic, Persian and Bantu words.

In 1329, the great world traveler Ibn Batuta visited Mogadishu, Mombasa and Kilwa. He found Mogadishu to be a thriving market place "with paved streets and many large domed mosques". The people were "law abiding and pious, wore plenty of gold and silver jewelry and ate off Chinese porcelain." Further south, the city of Kilwa was the capital of a large kingdom ruled by Sultan Mawahid Hasan, the fourth in the line of the Mahdali dynasty founded by immigrants from Yemen. Ibn Batuta had an audience with the Sultan and found him to be "a man of great humility who sits with poor people, eats with them and respects the ulema and the sheriff".

The spread of Islam further south towards the horn of Africa was arrested by the appearance of European gunboats early in the 16th century. In 1505 the Portuguese occupied Kilwa, razed all of its 300 mosques and slaughtered its population. In 1508 they occupied Mozambique and more slaughter followed. The Portuguese challenge was taken up by the Ottomans. The Omani Sultan, Saif ibn Sultan, working with the Ottoman navy, drove off the Portuguese, reclaimed most of the Sahel (meaning, the coast) for the Muslims and moved his capital from Oman to Kilwa. The struggle for control of East Africa continued through much of the 16th and 17th centuries with the Omani capital shifting between East Africa and the Persian Gulf. Successive Omani dynasties, like the Yarubis and Sayyedis participated in this struggle alongside the Ottomans. After the year 1600, a

military equilibrium developed with the Muslims controlling the coastline north of Shofala and the Portuguese holding onto the areas south of it.

In the 17th century the Dutch displaced the Portuguese as the dominant naval power in the Indian Ocean. Many of the important Portuguese colonies, such as Cape Town in South Africa, Colombo in Sri Lanka and Malacca in Malaysia, fell to the Dutch. It was the Indonesian islands, however, that felt the full brunt of Dutch colonial designs. In their frequent wars with the sultans of the Archipelago, the Dutch captured Muslim prisoners and shipped them to Cape Town. Some among the prisoners were scholars and sufi shaykhs. These scholars were the first to introduce Islam into the area around the Cape of Good Hope. Today, the tombs of many of these honored shaykhs dot the landscape of southern Africa. The venerated tomb of Syed Abdur Rahman who was brought in chains from Sumatra to Cape Town in 1652 illustrates this observation.

In 1805, the Omani Sultan, Saeed Ibn Sultan shifted his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar. A ruler with foresight and wisdom, he built Oman into a prosperous empire. He encouraged agriculture and trade, introduced the cultivation of cloves into Zanzibar, facilitated Muslim immigration and invited the neighboring African rulers to embrace Islam. After his death, the Empire of Oman was divided into an Arab province and an East African province. Sultan Majid Ibn Saeed became the Sultan of the Sahel. It was this sultan who founded the city of Dar es Salaam and moved his capital from Zanzibar to that city.

The death of Sultan Majid in 1870 marked the end of Muslim rule in East Africa. It was the height of the colonial period. Britain, Germany, Portugal and Italy reached an understanding to carve up the East African territories. In 1883, the Germans occupied Zanzibar. The Portuguese moved into the area south of Cape Delgado and annexed it to Mozambique. The British moved into Kenya. In 1887 the Zanzibar Sultan Bargash ibn Saeed sold the cities of Dar es Salaam, Kilwa and Lindi to the Germans for a sum of four million Marks. In 1889 he accepted a British protectorate over Pemba and Zanzibar. The following year he surrendered Mogadishu to the Italians for a sum of 160,000 Indian rupees. In 1894 he gave a perpetual lease on Mombasa to the British for an annual payment of 10,000 British pounds. In 1907 the British organized the territories near Lake Nyasa under the name of Nyasaland that later became the Republic of Malawi. The Germans

organized their colonial holdings under the name of Tanganyika; after their defeat in the First World War (1918) they surrendered it to the British.

On the heels of colonization came an army of missionaries from

Europe, well financed by private sources and encouraged by the colonial administrations. At stake was the very soul of Africa. The colonialists suppressed the study of Arabic and discouraged the use of Swahili. The missionaries established educational institutions whose agenda, in addition to preparing the students for jobs in the colonial administrations was to convert the Africans to Christianity. Afraid that their children would lose their faith, the Muslims avoided the missionary schools. They waged a valiant battle to survive by running an alternate educational system based on the madrasah and the shaykh. But resources were meager and quality suffered. The graduates of the missionary schools found good jobs in the colonial administrations so that when colonialism receded after World War II and Africa became independent, it was the Christians who were in control of the civil administrations. The disparity in education introduced an element of tension between the Muslims and the Christians in some parts of East Africa that continues to this day.

The Hajj of Mansa Musa

Embracing an area more than half a million square miles, the kingdom of Mali was undoubtedly one of the richest and most prosperous on earth in the 14th century. Its territory touched the Atlantic Ocean to the west and extended as far as the bend in the Niger River to the east. From north to south, it embraced the entire swath of land south of the Sahara to the thick tropical forests of equatorial Africa. The kingdom was richly endowed with gold, salt, cola nuts and ivory, which were in great demand in the markets of the Mediterranean. But above all, it was endowed with gifted and far-sighted rulers like Mansa Musa.

From our perspective, the important element in Mali was that it was Muslim. This fact made it an integral part of the vast Islamic world. Trade and ideas flowed freely between Mali, North Africa, Spain, Egypt and Arabia. Muslim traders plied the desert with their caravans carrying brass work from Spain, brocades from Egypt, precious stones from India and returned with gold, salt, cola nuts and ivory. More important was the flow of ideas and scholars. Africans traveled to Mecca for Hajj and brought back books written in Baghdad, Cairo and Kairouan. Islamic jurists and ulema were in great demand in the learning centers of Sijilmasa, Timbaktu, Mali and Ghana. African soldiers were very much a part of Muslim armies in Spain, Egypt and India. Mali was thus a part of the Islamic mosaic contributing its wealth and its resources to the prosperity of Asia and Europe alike.

Mali is referred to in Arabic as Mallel. It was inhabited by the Mandinka who claim their descent from Bilal ibn Rabah, companion of the Prophet and the first Muezzin of Islam. Bilali Banuma is the name given to Bilal in the Mandinka language. Islamic influence in Mali from the 7th century onwards is confirmed by the oral traditions, which were the basis for much of the historical evidence in Africa, until present day scholars discovered the great libraries in Timbaktu and Jenne. Muslim historians like Ibn Hisham and Al Yaqubi (9th century), Al Bakri (11th century) and Ibn

Khaldun (14th century) have recorded the penetration of Islam in the Mali region.

The initial thrust for political consolidation among the Mandinka tribes came from the discovery of gold in the mines located at Bure. Wealth, a measure of surplus human energy, is a primary engine for political centralization. Only faith, that transcendental element in collective human effort, surpasses wealth in this respect. To protect the caravans that carried gold, local hunter-associations were formed. These were loose military groupings directed towards a common goal, namely, the protection of trade routes. It was not until the reign of Sundiata that the Mandinka forged the political union that gave birth to Mali.

Sundiata, who ruled from 1230-1255, is known in the Mandinka language as Mari-Djata. According to some sources, Sundiata was born into a Muslim family. According to others, such as Ibn Khaldun, he accepted Islam as an adult. The Mandinka were under continuous military pressure from a rival tribe, the Susus. In the year 1230, in a series of military engagements, Sundiata defeated Sumangru, king of the Susus. Following this decisive victory, the kings and chiefs of the Mandinka gathered together and swore their allegiance to Sundiata. Tradition records that Sundiata wore a Muslim dress on this historic occasion. Henceforth Islam was to provide the universal cohesive force for the Mandinka, transcending their allegiance to tribe and region. The Mali Empire was born.

Mansa Uli succeeded his father Sundiata. The word Mansa (or Mansu) in Mandinka means king, Uli is a local pronunciation of Ali. Uli extended the borders of Mali in every direction. To the north, he added the important trading centers of Walata and Timbaktu. To the east, he added Gao. To the west, he expanded into Senegal and Gambia, reaching the Atlantic Ocean. Mali thus became the owner of north-south as well as east-west trade routes and the repository of important centers of learning.



After Mansa Uli (d. 1285), Mali went through a period of turbulence over issues of succession. When the turbulence died down, Mansa Musa, perhaps the most able and best known of Mali monarchs, ascended the throne in 1307. Mansa Musa (1307-1337) consolidated the administration of the state, encouraged trade and protected trade routes. In 1324, he performed his Hajj. According to Ibn Khaldun, he took with him an entourage of 12,000. (Some writers claim his entourage was as large as 72,000). The Malians were rich and carried with them a plentiful supply of gold. They spent so much of it during their trip that the price of gold fell in North Africa and Egypt and the price of commodities increased, causing considerable inflation.

On his return from Hajj, Mansa Musa stopped off in Cairo and Kairouan, bought a large number of books and returned home accompanied by Maliki jurists, administrators and Qur'anic scholars. He richly endowed the African universities in Walata, Timbaktu and Gao, built mosques, patronized scholarship, encouraged mass education and established closer relations with the Muslim powers of North Africa and the Mamluke Sultan of Egypt, Nasiruddin Muhammed (1309-1340).

Mansa Musa is known in history as a pious man, a scholar, a generous patron and a far-sighted ruler. In chronological terms, Mansa Musa ruled less than a hundred years after the fall of Baghdad (1258) and the total destruction of Central Asia and Persia by the Mongols. In the early part of the 14th century, there were only three parts of the Muslim world that had

any semblance of political and economic power. These were Mamluke Egypt, the Empire of Mali and the Sultanate of Delhi. Persia was just recovering under Ghazan the Great and the Ottomans were only in the nascent state of their global upsurge.

We know a great deal of the status of Islam in Mali through the writings of Ibn Batuta (1304-1377), the great world traveler, who visited the region in 1354. Ibn Batuta met the ruler of the state, stayed with the jurists and common folks alike and through his keen insight analyzed its society and its culture. According to Ibn Batuta, the Africans were punctual in their observance of salat, were extremely fastidious in observing rules of cleanliness and competed with each other in the giving of zakat. Memorizing, learning and recitation of the Qur'an were honored and encouraged. Poetry and culture flourished. And women enjoyed dignified freedom unequaled in the Islamic world at that time.

Some scholars, like Ivan Van Sertima in his book, "They Came Before Columbus", have asserted that Africans were the first to discover America. Recent research into the historical records of the period has confirmed this assertion. The historian Shihabuddin Abul Abbas Ahmed (1300-1384) describes the Mali explorations of the Atlantic Ocean in his book, *Masalik al absar fi mamalik al amsar* (Roadways for those who have sight and are searching, in the provinces of the kingdoms). Empirical evidence to support pre-Columbian contacts between Africa and America is abundant. African sculpture in the West Indies is a replica of similar work in West Africa. The ocean currents from the coast of Sene-Gambia to the Indies and the coast of Brazil would make such a journey plausible. But the mere presence of ocean currents does not bring about monumental historical events like the discovery of a continent. Such events require foresight, planning and most important, capital and material resources. Mali possessed such resources in abundance. It was so rich, in fact, that it could disturb the money supply in the Mediterranean world. It had an abundant supply of wood in the Sene-Gambia region with which to build large ships. It had tremendous human resources in a vast and far-flung empire. And its rulers were far-sighted with a global vision. If the Africans did visit the American continent, it must have been during the period of Mansa Musa.

Al Moghili and Askiya Muhammed

Very few thinkers have influenced the history of West Africa as has the Algerian scholar Al Moghili who lived in the second half of the 15th century. Great ideas resonate through history much like the echo of drums between chains of mountains. Each reverberation provides fresh impetus for action. When ideas are implemented through great men and women, history is transformed and human affairs are reshaped. Al Moghili's ideas, implemented through Askiya Muhammed (also known as Askiya the Great) fundamentally changed the course of West African history and provided the inspiration for reformist movements in Nigeria, Mali and Sene-Gambia in modern times.

In the mid-15 th century, the empire of Mali disintegrated and Songhay emerged as the largest and most powerful of West African states. It was an ancient kingdom that had maintained its independence through the Mali period. Al Yaqubi, writing in the 9th century, describes Songhay as an important African kingdom ruled by a Muslim. Another historian, Al Bakri maintains that when the ruler of Songhay ascended the throne in 1068, he was presented with a copy of the Qur'an and a shield from the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad as a symbol of his royal authority.

The capital city of Songhay was Kukiya, situated about 60 miles south of the important trading center of Gao on the Niger River. Askiya Muhammed moved the capital city to Gao in 1497. Ibn Batuta visited the city of Gao in 1352 and described it as the most important city in



the Sudan. There were two main mosques, one for the royal court and the other that served as the Jami' Masjid. The population was punctual in performing the daily prayers. In the bazaars, the local population mingled with merchants from Morocco, Egypt and beyond. Further south, the important trading center of Jenne was also Muslim. With Jenne as their base, African merchants were able to propagate Islam all the way to the borders of the tropical forest region.

Although Songhay existed as a kingdom well before the year 1000, it was during the reign of Sunni Ali that its borders expanded in every direction. Sunni Ali added Timbaktu and Jenne to his conquests thereby consolidating the extent of the empire from the edge of the Sahara in the north to the fringes of the tropical forests in the south. At its height, the Songhay empire was as large and powerful as the Mali empire, embracing an area of more than half a million square miles and controlling all the north-south and east-west trade routes from West Africa.

Sunni Ali was a far-sighted monarch, using tact and compromise to forge an empire. He was a courageous man, a shrewd statesman and an able administrator who used religion to forge trade links but did not allow it to hinder his political ambitions. The capture of Timbaktu brought him into conflict with the powerful Tuaregs who had hitherto controlled that city. Many of the ulema in his own empire were Tuaregs. Consequently, there was always a degree of tension between Sunni Ali and the ulema whom he suspected of being sympathetic to the Tuaregs. For this reason, some

Muslim writers have accused Sunni Ali of being anti-Muslim but this charge is not supported by historical facts.

After Sunni Ali, Songhay entered a period of instability. His son, Sunni Barou, refused to declare himself a Muslim and was therefore deposed by an army officer, Muhammed Turi, in the year 1493. Turi ruled Songhay as Askiya Muhammed I, from 1493-1528. Askiya Muhammed was a pious man, a noble soldier, a superb administrator and a man of learning. He encouraged scholars from North Africa, Egypt and beyond to migrate to Songhay. During his days, the cities of Gao, Timbaktu and Jenne became important centers of learning known throughout the Islamic world. Askiya the Great appointed Islamic scholars to important government positions in the departments of justice and administration. He listened to them and followed their advice in matters of state. One such scholar who had immense influence with Askiya Muhammed was the Algerian Al Moghili.

Al Moghili was a proponent of purity of faith. He was against the commercialization of religion and opposed the appointment of ill-informed and self-proclaimed scholars as jurists. Religion was too serious a matter to be left in the hands of illiterate salesmen. He held that Islam should not be packaged and sold like a product in the market, or be bent and reshaped to suit the needs of a ruler. It was to be the eternal message for the spiritual and material well-being of mankind, as was taught by the Prophet.

Al Moghili maintained, as did earlier scholars in Islam, that at the turn of every century a great reformer would arise to bring it back to the model established by the Prophet. Askiya Muhammed believed that he was one such reformer. He sought Al Moghili's advice and ruled in accordance with it. He appointed jurists of repute and ensured their independence through generous grants. He encouraged education and honored scholarship. He believed that Islam was the vehicle not just for establishing commercial links and furthering trade, but was a universal mechanism for literacy, culture, law and justice. During his period, Islam spread far and wide in Africa, from the Atlantic coast in the west to the pasturelands of northern Nigeria.

Faith is that one central stream that binds Islamic history together. Over time, this stream gets polluted just as a stream gets polluted as it runs through inhabited terrain. The reformers wage a struggle to clean up this stream, purify it and bequeath its waters to those who live downstream. Al

Moghili's ideas have had a major impact on later Islamic movements in Africa. Uthman dan Fuduye (d. 1817), the great Islamic reformer in West Africa, drew his inspiration from the ideas of Al Moghili and carried his struggle in the model of Askiya Muhammed.

Askiya the Great was deposed in 1528 because he lost his eyesight in his old age and was unable to rule. Following a brief period of instability, Songhay experienced a second period of peace and prosperity from 1539 to 1591. However, disputes over the issue of succession in the 1580s weakened the empire and it became prey to invaders. Towards the end of the century, Portuguese slave traders carried their raids into Songhay territory. In 1591, following border skirmishes over control of the salt mines, a Moroccan army under Judar Pasha invaded Songhay, captured Gao and brought the territories around the bend of the Niger River under Moroccan rule. The Moroccan invasion hastened the disintegration of local Muslim power. Instability ensued, making it easier for the European predators to raid further into West Africa in search of slaves. The great Atlantic slave trade had just begun.

WOMEN IN A MAN'S WORLD

Summary

Islam opened up the commercial, legal, social and political space to women. The Qur'an confirmed their legal status as owners of property. The Sunnah of the Prophet and the example of his wife Khadija sanctioned the autonomy of a woman in the sphere of business and commerce. The Prophet, as the head of the Islamic community, was equally accessible to men and women for social consultations and political advice. This openness was gradually compromised over time. In the Omayyad period, the threat of assassination by the Kharijites forced the caliphs to distance themselves from the common man. In the 8th century, as Greek influence infiltrated into Baghdad and dancing girls were imported into the palaces of the nobles, the ulema, concerned that lewdness would unravel the moral fabric of society, sanctioned further restrictions on women. Gradually, women were shut out of the commercial, social and political space that was once open to them. The seclusion of women was challenged by the customs and traditions of the Turks and the Africans who entered the fold of Islam in the 9th century. It was from among these newcomers to the faith that the great queens of Islam emerged, who ruled as sovereigns and left a legacy of honor and pride for all Muslims. Later, in the 16th century, the roster of women sovereigns expanded to include the names of many Indo-Pakistani and Indonesian Muslims as well.

Hijab and Women Sovereigns

History is not created with a big bang. It moves in subtle, almost imperceptible steps in which all men and women participate. It is an edifice on which the action of every human, no matter how humble, has left its imprint. Great events do occur, but they merely mark the milestones in the continuing unfolding of history.

In recreating the critical moments in Islamic history that have molded and shaped the present, a student of history cannot but be awestruck by the majesty of the human processes that have led up to those moments. Much like the buildup of stresses in an earthquake fault, the actions of ordinary men and women create tensions in the flow of history. When these tensions finally do culminate in historical moments, they are very much like the sudden shift of geological plates that mark the onset of an earthquake.

Very often, in focusing on the deeds of mighty men who made war and won battles, the mundane struggles of ordinary men and women are overlooked. Yet, it is from the ordinariness of these struggles that great events emerge. The lowly peasant is as much an actor in the drama of history as the mightiest king. It is in this context that one must examine the contributions of women in Islamic history.

There have been great women, those heroic ladies of the past, who made their way to the top of the historic edifice despite the obstructions placed in their way. Their achievements were even more remarkable when we measure them against a background of the gradual marginalization of women in Muslim societies. The exclusion of women from public space occurred gradually over centuries and must be understood in the broader context of the fragmentation of the unitary Caliphate and the separation of the masses from the rulers. When looked at in this context, the achievements of great women like Razia of India and Shajarat al Durr of Egypt who, despite heavy odds, became Sultanas and queens, stand out as even more remarkable.

Islam liberated women from the constrictions imposed by pre-Islamic Arab society. It opened up the spiritual, economic, social and political space to them. Women were bestowed an individuality. They were to live with men on a platform of equity and justice, partners in the creation of a universal community enjoining what is noble, forbidding what is evil and believing in God. The Prophet built such a community in Madina. The focus of life for this community was the Prophet's mosque, built adjacent to his house and it was from here that he elaborated on religious and social issues, adjudicated legal matters and discussed war and peace. There are three important issues to remember here. First, there was no distance between the head of the community and members of the community. The young and the old, the poor and the rich, immigrants and locals, Madinites as well as foreigners had equal access to the leader. Second, the leader of the community was not just a political and military figure. He was also the religious and social authority who led the congregation in prayer and had responsibility before the Shariah. Third, the social, political and religious space in the mosque was open to women. Although congregational prayer was not obligatory for women, they were not prevented from praying in the mosque. Women prayed in the mosque in rows behind the men. They had equal access to the Prophet to seek counsel and advice on social, religious and political matters.

When the Prophet passed away, the Companions reaffirmed the continuity of Islam as an historical process by the establishment of the Caliphate. As defined by Ibn Khaldun, (Muqaddamah, p. 476, op. cit.), "the function of Caliphate was to enable the ammah (common folks) to live in accordance with the injunctions of the Shariah." In other words, it was to establish divine patterns in the matrix of human affairs. The

Caliphate was rule by law. It differed from the despotism of kingship both in its structure and its functionality. In a kingdom, the word of the king was law; he could make or break it as he saw fit. In a Caliphate, it was the divine law that was the governing paradigm. The Caliph was accountable before the law just as much as the lowliest mendicant. Legitimacy of rule originated from a consensus of the community. The selection of the Caliph was through a process of consultation. The political, judicial, economic, religious and social space was shared between the ruler and the ruled. Even the most humble of citizens, man or woman, could question the Caliph on

his decisions, or demand justice in accordance with the law. Thus the Caliphate was fundamentally different from kingship in its doctrinal underpinnings, its institutions and its operations.

The Caliph occupied the central stage in a four dimensional religious-judicial-military-economic space, which was shared with all members of the community, men and women alike. Through a process of consultation, Abu Bakr as Siddiq became the first Caliph of Islam. In the tradition of the Prophet, the Caliph had four principal responsibilities. First, he was the religious head of the community. As such he led the congregation in prayer. Second, he was responsible for the implementation of divine law. He was expected to know the Shariah and to implement its injunctions in practice. Thus, he was the supreme judge. Third, he was responsible for the defense of the state. He led the army in times of war. Fourth, he was responsible for the economic well-being of the community. He ensured fair taxation, administered public works and arranged for correct and complete documentation of contracts and civil transactions.

These functions of the Caliph were compromised in time, one by one, some by historical necessity, others for the convenience of the Caliphs. The first to fall by the wayside was the religious function. The civil wars that erupted after the assassination of Caliph Uthman (656) unleashed the forces of extremism. The deadly attacks of the Kharijites on Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib, Emir Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan and Amr bin al As (661) demonstrated that the person of the Caliph was vulnerable to would-be assassins. The Kharijites were mortal enemies of any one who disagreed with them. Extremism begets extreme reactions. Muawiyah bin Abu Sufyan (d. 680), who fought his way to power and became the Caliph in 661, took the first step in this direction. He surrounded himself with a guard as a precaution against possible assassination. When he entered the mosque, the guard ensured that the common folk maintained a certain distance from the emir. The Omayyad Caliphs of Damascus, with the sole and notable exception of Omar bin Abdul Aziz, followed this practice of surrounding themselves with a guard. This was the first step in the bifurcation of political space between the ruler and the ruled.

In addition to security concerns, the administration of a vast empire, extending over three continents, required a person of exceptional caliber to organize, manage and provide oversight to the executive functions. This

person was called the vizier. The word vizier derives from mawazah, meaning to facilitate. As such, the vizier was the principal facilitator of the wishes of the sovereign, chief among which were defense, administration, finance and foreign affairs. During the Umayyad reign in Damascus (661-750), with the expansion of the empire in Asia, North Africa and Europe, the institution of the vizierate acquired enormous importance. The vizier became not only the functional arm of the empire, but also its principal think-tank and chief executive. He was privy to the Caliph's thinking as well as the inner workings of the court circles. The office of the vizier continued when the Abbasids seized power (750) and moved the capital to Baghdad.

With time, the functions of the vizierate were transformed. The Omayyad dynasty in Spain (760-1031), to put a distance between itself and some of the unpopular aspects of the defunct Omayyads of Damascus, de-emphasized the importance of the office of the vizierate. This they accomplished by splitting the vizierate into several departments. In place of a powerful single vizier formerly serving the emperor, there were now several viziers. This proliferation of the title had a secondary consequence. Coordination between the different viziers and communication between the sovereign and the vizierates required a new official. This official was called a hajib.

The word hajib derives from the root Arabic word h-j-b, meaning, to hide or conceal. The principal function of the hajib was to conceal the sovereign from the prying eye of the common folks, to protect the security of his person, to provide him with privacy and to act as a conduit for his wishes to the functioning viziers. Since the hajib had the ear of the sovereign, his position was considered higher than that of the viziers and he occupied the most spacious quarters, next to the sovereign, in the palace compounds. Sometimes, a grand vizier combined in himself the functions of a hajib and the supervision of the various viziers.

With the advent of the hajibs, the separation of the ruler from the ruled became institutionalized. Many of the Caliphs gave up the practice of leading the congregational prayers. Harun al Rashid (d. 809) was the first Caliph to employ professional khatibs to lead the prayers. Thereafter, with rare exceptions, it was the khatib, not the Caliph, who stood in front of the community of believers to give the Friday sermon. With time, the position

of the khatib degraded to that of a professional mullah who came to regard the pulpit as his personal domain much as the ruler regarded the throne as his personal property. The khatib, who owed his job to the ruler, prayed for the health and well-being of the ruler in the khutba. Whenever there was a change in dynasties or when a new strongman took power, his name was promptly substituted for the old ruler. Similarly, the privilege of administering justice and giving fatwas (legal opinions) on matters of jurisprudence was also delegated to hired kadis.

The degree of separation between the Caliph and the common folks varied with the urbanization of a dynasty. The greater the urbanization, the greater was the separation. For instance, the Omayyads in urban Spain, employed hajibs, whereas the Murabitun and the Al Muhaddith who followed them, did not. The latter dynasties were held together more through tribal and racial cohesion than through attachment to dynastic rule and they delegated the functions of security, administration and management to their own kinsmen.

In the 10th century, when the Turks rose to power, they supplanted the institution of the Caliphate with the new institution of the Sultanate and the separation of temporal rule from religious authority was complete. The sultan became the political and military ruler. The caliph remained the nominal and titular head of the community, bereft even of dispensing religious fatwas because that responsibility was delegated to professional kadis. The separation of political and military authority from religious responsibility before Divine Law led to the rise of despots. The farther a ruler was from the ruled, the more disdainful he was of the common man. Whereas the caliphs were only representatives selected to enforce Divine Law, the emerging despots were self-appointed political military authorities who forced their own law upon their subjects.

The Seljuk Turks continued the practice of employing viziers and hajibs. In the Ottoman courts, the hajibs were called mabayeen. In the medieval world, the concentration of such enormous power in the vizier was an invitation to ambitious men to usurp royal privileges for themselves. Over the centuries, many an incompetent sovereign found himself displaced by his own vizier.

Security of the sultans took on urgency with the rise of the Assassin Movement in the 10 th and 11th centuries, which became the nemesis of

Sunni sultans. As the Turkish Empire expanded, the hajibs were given further responsibilities to oversee the security of the palace grounds, greet royal visitors and supervise the royal kitchen. Thus the impact of the Assassin Movement in the 10th and 11th centuries was similar to that of the Kharijites in the 7th century, namely, to further isolate the ruler from the ammah (common folk).

The unitary concept of the Caliphate as the central focus of political, religious, judicial and administrative space was shattered and in its place sprang up separate spaces occupied by the sultan and his hired professionals. Certainly, there were exceptional rulers, such as Omar bin Abdul Aziz (d. 719) and Sulaiman the Magnificent (d. 1565) who sought to reverse this trend and made concerted attempts to live up to the ideals of a caliph. But such cases were few and far between. Through most of Islamic history, the Caliphate survived as a fossilized replica of its pristine self.

The threat of assassination, the fossilization of the caliphate and the rise of the sultanates, the emergence of the viziers, the hiring of professional khatibs and the appointment of hajibs, all contributed to the isolation of the ruler from the ruled. Within the isolated political and social space of the common folk, women found themselves even more isolated. The process was slow and subtle. It was a requirement that a caliph lead the congregational prayers. The qualifications for this function were addressed in all the major schools of Fiqh, which developed between 765-950. This was a period of global expansion of Muslim political power. Accompanying this expansion there was an influx of ideas from Greece, India, China and Africa. Islam was faced with the challenge of defining its interfaces with other civilizations while strengthening its own ideational structure in the face of alien ideas. Fiqh (jurisprudence) was the doctrinal response of the Islamic civilization to the challenge of these older civilizations.

The five major schools of Fiqh (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Ja'afariya) came up with different answers as to whether a woman was qualified to lead a congregational prayer. In the opinion of the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Ja'afariya Schools, a woman may lead a congregation of other women and children but not of men. The Maliki and Hanbali Schools were stricter. Since a woman could not lead juma'a prayers, this automatically barred her from aspiring to be a caliph or imam. However, the spiritual and religious space remained open to women during the early Caliphate. During

the Caliphate of Omar ibn al Khattab, women prayed behind the men, took part in the discussions in the mosque and on many an occasion, questioned the caliph about affairs of state. In the great mosques built during the 8th and 9th centuries, provision was made for a separate section for women.

In the 9th century, as the Turks entered the fold of Islam in large numbers and the sultanate became the mechanism of temporal power, it was the sultan, not the caliph, who defended the ummah from its enemies, appointed executive functionaries and implemented the tenets of the law. Following their own cultural traditions, the Turks were more open to the entry of women into the political, judicial and military space. Turkish women rode into battle with men, took part in the affairs of state and sat next to sultans and jurists advising them in the dispensation of justice. This pattern of women's participation in public affairs continued in later centuries in the courts of the Turkomans, the Great Moghuls, the Africans of the western Sudan and the Indonesians.

Since a sultan was not necessarily required to lead the prayer, this function having been delegated to professional khatibs, a woman was not precluded from becoming a sultan. However, further historical developments impeded the access of women to political and social space. The 9th century saw an influx of Greek rational thought and Greek culture into the courts of Baghdad. The Mu'tazilites emerged as champions of rational thought and were embraced with open arms by the caliphs. But then the Mu'tazilites overstepped their bounds and applied their methods to Divine revelation. They claimed that the Qur'an was created in time. This position drew a determined and persistent reaction from the ulema and the Mu'tazilites were repudiated. What emerged triumphant from this caldron of ideas was a doctrinal Islam that was even more conservative in its approach to social and cultural matters. This was the period when Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal codified the Hanbali School of Fiqh, which is the most conservative of the four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence.

The infusion of Greek culture had brought dancing girls into the palaces of Baghdad and Muslim jurists, fearing an assault on the order and stability of society, took a hard stance against the intermingling of men and women. This was done presumably for the protection of women. With time however, the position hardened and women were precluded from social and political

life altogether. Legal opinions were offered that would even bar a woman from the mosque.

The universal brotherhood and sisterhood that was created by the Prophet was shattered and in its place emerged class distinctions between the ruler and the ruled and sex distinctions between men and women. The masses were secluded from political life and among the masses, women were even more secluded.

It is a tribute to the inexorable spirit of humankind that the masses never give up. Those who are excluded continue to challenge the status quo and it is through these tensions that human progress ensues. With the introduction of Turkish and African blood into Islam and the later infusion of Mongol, Indian and Indonesian elements, the rigid separation of women from politics and culture was challenged. And it was from among these “newcomers” that the great queens of Islam emerged, women such as Razia Sultana of Delhi, Shajarat al Durr of Cairo and Noor Jehan of the Great Moghuls, who distinguished themselves in the political space and left their indelible mark on Islamic history.

Razia, Sultana of Delhi

Islam liberated men and women from the shackles of slavery and made them masters of the world. The history of the Mamlukes illustrates this observation. In the 9th and 10th centuries, there was a brisk slave trade down the Volga River, near the Caspian Sea. The Vikings raided Europe with unrelenting ferocity in search of booty and slaves. Eastern Europe, fossilized as it was between local fiefdoms, was a particular target of these raids. Men, women and children were captured in northern and eastern Europe, brought down the Volga River and sold to Muslim and Jewish merchants. Ibn Fadlun gives a graphic picture of the deplorable conditions in the Viking slave ships.

The root word in Arabic for Mamluke is m-l-k (malaka, to own). The European slaves were in great demand in Muslim courts because the men made excellent soldiers and the women were sought for their fair skin. Young Mamluke men were trained in special camps as bodyguards, taught the precepts of Islam and inducted into the army. The Spanish court of Cordoba as well as the Fatimid court in Cairo employed Mamluke bodyguards. However, it was with the rise of the Turks that the Mamlukes came into their own. The Turks displaced the Arabs and the Persians from the centers of power in Asia during the 9th and 10th centuries and became kingmakers. As the Mamlukes were inducted into the armies and the Turks dominated the armed forces, the slaves came to be referred to as Mamluke Turks. Some of the slaves were from Turkish tribes (prior to their conversion to Islam) in which case there was both an affinity of blood with their Turkish owners as well as an affinity of profession.

According to the Shariah, a Muslim may not hold another Muslim as a slave. Therefore, as the Mamlukes became Muslim, they became free men and women, with full privileges accorded to all believers. In an age when the path to kingship led through the army, the Mamlukes were not only great soldiers but were in close proximity to the center of power. Through their exploits they rose through the court ranks, married the daughters of the sultans and themselves became kings and sultans. Islam had taken them

from the slave ships of the Vikings to the luxurious thrones of Asia and Africa. It was from the ranks of these Mamlukes that the 13th century dynasties of India and Egypt emerged.

Razia was the daughter of Altumish, a Mamluke who was a slave of Qutbuddin Aibak, Turkish sultan of Delhi. Altumish demonstrated such extraordinary abilities as a soldier that he was rapidly promoted to be a general officer in the army. Qutbuddin gave his own daughter in marriage to Altumish. After the death of his father-in-law, Altumish ascended the throne of Delhi (1211). He proved himself to be not only a first class soldier but an outstanding statesman as well. When Genghiz Khan descended upon Central Asia (1219), Altumish kept him out of India through consummate diplomacy and a determined military posture. Delhi and Lahore were saved from the ravages of the Mongols. Altumish had three sons and one daughter, Razia. The sons proved to be incompetent, more interested in wine and song than in the affairs of the state. Altumish therefore nominated his daughter to be his successor, against the advice of some of his courtiers and kadis. In accordance with her father's wishes, Razia ascended the throne of Hindustan in the year 1236.

Altumish was an exceptional monarch not only because he rose from being a slave to become the sultan of one of the most powerful dynasties of the age, but because he broke with tradition and nominated his daughter as his heir-apparent in recognition of her merit and ability over his sons who were incompetent. Razia immediately faced a challenge from her brother Ruknuddin who had killed his own brother to intimidate Razia and force her to abdicate. Razia, a consummate politician, went public and in the Jamia Masjid of Delhi, appealed to the general populace for justice. The common folk displayed their intrinsic love of fair play. Ruknuddin was arrested for the murder of his own brother, tried before a Shariah court and executed.

Razia wasted no time in establishing her authority as the sovereign of Hindustan. She ordered coins minted in her name as "Pillar of women, Queen of the times, Sultana Razia, daughter of Shamsuddin Altumish". The juma'a khutba was read in her name. However, her authority was not legitimate until the Caliph in Baghdad accepted it. Even though he had lost all of his dominions in Asia to the Mongols, the Caliph was still the spiritual and titular head of Sunni Islam and he carried the title of Emir ul Momineen

(leader of the believers). Only he could bestow legitimacy upon a sultan. Razia, a Turk and a Sunni, declared her allegiance to the Abbasid Caliph with the following proclamation: “In the time of Imam al Mustansir, Emir ul Momineen, Malika Altumish, daughter of Sultan Altumish, she who increases the glory of Emir ul Momineen”. The Caliph recognized her as the “Malika” of Delhi (1237), in part because he needed a Sunni bulwark to the east of the vast territories now controlled by the Mongols, who were closing in on Baghdad itself.

A great deal of information about Sultana Razia has come down to us through the writings of Ibn Batuta, one of the greatest world travelers, who visited and lived in India (1335-1340) a hundred years after Razia. According to him, Razia rode the horse into battle dressed like a soldier, administered justice, conquered new territories and presided over the affairs of state. But the jealousy of men knows no bounds. To the Turkish generals and noblemen, the ascension of a woman to the throne was a difficult pill to swallow. Razia was young, beautiful and unmarried. Many of the noblemen made marriage proposals to her. She spurned these proposals. Instead, she fell in love with an African slave of the court, Jamaluddin Yaqut, who was the keeper of the royal stables. The rumor mill of Delhi, fanned by the jealousy of spurned and disappointed generals, went to work. Her case was brought before the kadis of Delhi. Accusations were made that she had gotten too close to a man. The kadis ruled that Razia had violated the Shariah and should therefore step down, get married and retire behind the veil. They nominated a Turkish general Altuniya as her successor. Undaunted,



Razia marched out of Delhi Fort to meet the general in battle. As fate would have it, she was defeated and was taken prisoner. Razia was not only a splendid monarch; she was also a beautiful young woman. The victorious Altuniya fell in love with his prisoner and married her. The two advanced together towards Delhi to recapture the city that was hers as her father's legacy. Unfortunately, once again, the combined forces of Razia and Altuniya suffered defeat. Razia fled the battlefield. Exhausted and hungry, she took refuge in a farmer's hut. As she slept, the farmer noticed that his guest, who was dressed like a man, wore a garment embroidered in gold. He killed her in her sleep but was caught by the townspeople as he tried to sell the gold ornaments.

In an obscure lot in the old city of Delhi lies buried this stalwart lady. The alleys to her tomb lead a visitor through decrepit buildings and nauseous open gutters. A simple inscription marks the entrance to her tomb, hidden from the gully. Encroachments have all but consumed the site, blocking the sun from her wistful tomb. Her husband Altuniya lies by her side and the graves of two infants of unknown origin lie near their feet. Such is the fate history has accorded to one of the most celebrated women the world has known.

Ibn Batuta records how the common folks venerated their queen. By the year 1335, when Ibn Batuta visited Delhi, her grave had become a venerated tomb and a place of pilgrimage. A beautiful mausoleum with a dome had been erected on her grave. India was by now a land influenced by sufi movements and Razia had become a saint. No wonder!

Razia had triumphed in her tragedy. She had changed history. The common man and woman saw in her one of their own who rose from being the daughter of a slave to becoming the first Muslim queen of one of the most powerful empires in the world. She rose like a star and like a meteorite she fell, illuminating the world both in her rise and in her fall. She demonstrated in her brilliance that a woman could be the head of a Muslim state, in spite of the constraints put upon her by tradition and custom. Women throughout the ages would invoke her name in defense of their rights and her name would forever be inscribed indelibly in the lyrics and folklore of the vast subcontinent of India and Pakistan and in the languages of distant lands in all continents.

Shajarat al Durr, Queen of Egypt

Fourteen years after Razia ascended the throne of Delhi (1236), another remarkable lady, Shajarat al Durr, became the queen of Egypt (1250). Like Razia, Shajarat al Durr was a Mamluke and a Turk. Specifically, Shajarat belonged to the family of Bahri Mamlukes, the Turkish tribe who had settled in the islands that dot the Nile.

Those were turbulent times for the world of Islam. There existed at the time a de-facto alliance between the Crusaders and the Mongols to wipe out Islam. Genghiz Khan had devastated Asia. His successors were knocking at the gates of Baghdad. Besides Egypt, only India had escaped the Mongols, thanks to the diplomacy and resolute stand of Altumish, father of Razia. Samarqand, Bukhara, Kabul, Herat, Neshapur, Multan and Tabriz had fallen to the Mongols (1219-1242). Persia, Khorasan, Afghanistan and Iraq lay in ruins. The Crusaders, after being ejected from Palestine, had converged on Spain and taking advantage of the internal convulsions in Andalus, had captured much of the Peninsula. Cordoba, capital of the Omayyad Caliphate in Spain, fell to them in 1236. All of Andalus had been lost except for the tract of land around Granada. The thrust of Crusader attacks had now shifted to Egypt and North Africa.

It was the Mamluke Turks who withstood the combined onslaught of the Mongols and the Crusaders. Even as the Arabs, Persians and Andalusians lay prostrate before their enemies, it was the Mamluke shield that stopped the Crusader-Mongol armies at the gates of Jerusalem and at the banks of the Indus River. The victory of Sultan Baybars at the Battle of Ayn Jalut (1261) saved Mecca and Madina from the same fate as had earlier befallen Jerusalem in the year 1096.

As a Mamluke, Shajarat al Durr was born into slavery. Like Razia of India, she rose to become the queen of Egypt. Two aspects of this rise from slavery to Sultana need re-emphasis. It is the egalitarian spirit of Tawhid

that breaks down the barriers between master and servant, black and white, owner and owned. Within the great fold of the believing ummah, all human beings—men and women, rich and poor—have the freedom to realize their full existential potential. Within this fold there is no master and no slave. The transcendence of the Divine makes insignificant the petty differences between humans based on wealth, position, race and tribe. All humans become equal in the eyes of God and equal before the Law. This egalitarian spirit was lost with time as the law of despots displaced the Divine Law and as the rulers segregated themselves from the ruled and hid behind hajibs. Secondly, the devastation wrought by the Mongols and the Crusaders destroyed the old aristocracy in the Muslim world. The Umayyad Emirate in Spain disappeared in 1236 with the fall of Cordoba and the Abbasids in Baghdad were eliminated in 1258. The destruction of the old social and political order gave an opportunity to the former slaves, the Mamlukes, to assert their authority and create a new social and political order. In this new order, as opposed to the old aristocratic order, there was room both for men and women, following the tradition of the Turks.

Shajarat's career bridged two dynasties. She was married to Malik al Saleh, the last Ayyubid ruler of Egypt. Al Saleh died in 1250 while Egypt was under attack by a combined French-German Crusader army led by King Louis IX. To avoid demoralization in the ranks, Shajarat worked with the army commanders to keep the news of her husband's death a secret. King Louis of France was personally in charge of his troops. Under Shajarat's leadership, Louis was soundly defeated and taken prisoner. A large number of French and German Crusaders were taken captive. During this critical time, al Saleh's son Turan Shah was absent from Cairo. Shajarat sent word to Turan asking him to return forthwith to the capital. Upon his return, she entrusted him with the reigns of power. But Turan proved incompetent. He alienated the powerful Mamluke generals who assassinated him (1250) and asked Shajarat to be the queen of Egypt.

Legitimacy of rule in Sunni Islam flowed from the Caliphs in Baghdad. Shajarat, as a Turk was a Sunni following the Hanafi Fiqh. Al Mustansir, 46th in the Abbasid dynasty, was the caliph in Baghdad. Shajarat sought the consent of Al Mustansir and while Baghdad was considering her application, she ruled as the sovereign of Egypt. She minted coins with her inscription and the khatibs at al Azhar read the Friday khutba in her name.

However, Shajarat was not successful in obtaining the title of Malika from the Caliph. Politically, there was less pressure on Baghdad to recognize a woman as a head of state in Cairo than in Delhi. To the east, in India, the presence of loyal Sultana Razia provided some insurance against the Mongols who had devoured all of the Asian provinces of the Caliphate and were knocking at the doors of Baghdad. By contrast, Cairo was far away from the Mongol front lines and was still very much in the spiritual orbit of the Abbasids. There was opposition also from the more conservative ulema of the Maliki School in Cairo. Al Mustansir, therefore, refused to recognize Shajarat as the Sultana of Egypt. The Mamluke guard, desperate for legitimacy of their mushrooming role in Cairo, nominated one of their own generals, Izzaddin Aibak, as the Sultan. Baghdad accepted this nomination and Mamluke rule began in Egypt. It was to last until the Ottomans captured Cairo in 1517.

Shajarat was not to be pushed aside so easily. She was a resourceful lady and a consummate political warrior. Determined to stay on the main stage in Cairo, she married Izzaddin Aibak. The two lived happily for seven years. The name of the queen was printed on the coins and blessed in the Friday sermons, along with that of the new sultan.

Shajarat was a learned lady and a patron of learning. She established several colleges in her name. She was also beautiful, witty, a good writer, a convincing speaker and an astute player in political life. However, fate was to intervene against her once again. Sharing of political power meant that the queen and the sultan remain faithful to each other in a monogamous relationship. But the geopolitics of the day required the sultan to have many wives. When Izzaddin decided to marry the daughter of the Turkish Atabeg Badruddin of Mosul, Shajarat could not reconcile the thought of sharing her husband and her power with a third party. Unable to dissuade her husband from the second marriage, she planned to murder him. Jealousy did its trick, an elaborate scheme was hatched and Izzaddin was assassinated as he visited a palace bath. Unfortunately for Shajarat, the Mamluke generals discovered her role in the murder. She was killed and her body was thrown over the ramparts of the Cairo Fort. She was later buried in the compound of one of the schools she had established.

The lives of these two remarkable ladies, Razia of India-Pakistan and Shajarat of Cairo, demonstrate how difficult it has been for women to

occupy political or social space in Islamic history. We have outlined how this happened gradually in Islamic history. First, the caliphs isolated themselves from the ruled. Muawiya introduced personal guards. Harun al Rashid delegated the responsibility for the Friday khutba to a professional kadi. Later caliphs, with a few notable exceptions, appointed hajibs as intermediaries between themselves and the people. The ummah of the Prophet and of the first four caliphs became the ammah of later rulers. The rulers secluded themselves in their palaces and their harems. Enormous bureaucracies grew up to institutionalize the separation of the throne from the sweat of the farmer. Women felt the brunt of this political isolation in two ways. First, in accordance with the major schools of Fiqh, which were developed during the Abbasid period, women were excluded from the juma'a prayers. A woman, by definition, could not be a caliph. Second, the seclusion of women from public or social activity received sanction from the political establishment of the Fatimid, Umayyad and Abbasid courts alike. As history unfolded, there became institutionalized two levels of hijab. At the first level, all Muslims, men and women alike, were marginalized and subjected to a hijab (concealment, separation) from their rulers. At the second level, women were subjected to an additional hijab from public life. The separation of women from political and social life was total and complete. Finally, when the Muslims lost their military-political power and the Caliphate ended, they were caught totally unprepared to cope with the challenge of modern civilization, which forced its way onto world stage with slogans of individual rights, equality for women, freedom and responsibility.

THE MONGOL DELUGE

Summary

The arrogance of one sultan, Shah Muhammed of Khorasm, inundated the Muslim world with the Mongol deluge. In the year 1219, Genghiz Khan descended from the highlands of Mongolia and devastated the lands of Central Asia and Persia. Ninety percent of the population of these areas was slaughtered. Once great cities lay in ruins. Centers of learning were obliterated. The Mongol advance continued into west Asia and eastern Europe after the death of Genghiz Khan. In 1258, Baghdad, the seat of the Caliphate, fell. The Caliph was trampled to death and the curtain fell on the classical Islamic civilization. Sensing a golden opportunity to extirpate Islam, the Crusaders formed an alliance with the Mongols. Only the determined stand of Mamluke Sultan Baybars stopped the combined armies of the Mongols, the Crusaders and the Armenians at Ayn Jalut near Nazareth, at the very gates of Jerusalem. There ensued a battle of the soul, a struggle between Christianity and Islam to convert the Mongols. The Muslims won this race when Ghazan the Great of Persia accepted Islam and Asia remained Muslim while Christianity retreated to Europe. The interrelation between the Crusades and the Mongol invasions is rarely noted in historical analysis. This section shows clearly the continuity and interrelation of these historical moments.

The Devastations of Genghiz Khan

It was the century when three powerful traditions-Islamic, Medieval Christian and Mongol-collided. The aftermath of this collision transformed all three traditions in ways that were profound and basic. The cataclysm of the Mongols was a global event, which left its indelible mark upon human history. It destroyed ancient dynasties, remade human races and fundamentally changed the way people approached religion and culture. The impact of the Mongols is to be felt even in the geopolitics of the world today.

To view the events of the 13th century from a Muslim perspective, one must look at the geopolitical situation of Eurasia in the year 1200. To a Muslim living around the turn of that century, the prospects for Islam could not be better. Salahuddin Ayyubi had thrown off the yoke of the Crusaders and had liberated Jerusalem (1187). Muhammed Ghorī had conquered Delhi (1191) and had established the Delhi Sultanate. The Al Muhaddithin had defeated the Christian Crusaders at the Battle of Alarcos (1196) and retained Muslim rule in Spain. The Fatimid schism in Egypt had ended. Imam Ghazzali's dialectic had overcome the challenge to orthodox (Sunni) Islam both from the Fatimid Gnostics and the philosopher Agnostics. Islam was taking root in Hindustan and had established a foothold in the Indonesian Islands.

Yet, in the midst of these triumphs, dark clouds were gathering on the distant horizon. Indeed, within a generation after 1200, the Muslim world came close to physical extinction. Never have the Muslims faced annihilation as they did during the 13th century. And never in Muslim history has Islam triumphed in its darkest hour as it did in the 13th century.

Between the years 1200-1220, three rulers of vastly different capabilities dominated the geopolitics of Central Asia: Caliph Al Nasir of Baghdad,

Sultan Alauddin Muhammed Shah of Khwarazm and Timujen (later known as Genghiz Khan) of Mongolia.

Sultan Alauddin ascended the throne of Khwarazm in the year 1200. Ambitious, egotistical and haughty, he was gifted with three able sons and soon consolidated his empire from the Amu Darya in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south. The lush and fertile valley of Farghana with its legendary cities of Samarqand and Bukhara were part of his domain. His successes evoked a jealous response in Baghdad from Caliph Al Nasir (1180-1225). Relations between the two went from bad to worse. Alauddin marched on Baghdad (1205) with the intent of replacing the caliph. As it sometimes happens at critical moments in history, Caliph Al Nasir was saved by the vagaries of nature. A powerful winter storm dumped enormous amounts of snow in the mountains of southwest Persia and Alauddin had to retire to Khorasan without a victory. Al Nasir did not forgive the shah for this intrusion and sent word to Genghiz Khan in far-away Mongolia inviting him to teach Sultan Alauddin a lesson. Historians record that a messenger's head was shaved, the message tattooed onto his shaven head, the hair allowed to grow back and the messenger sent through the territories of the Shah to Genghiz Khan. The latter, however, did not respond since he was busy with campaigns to the east in China.

Timujin, born in the year 1162 into a Mongol tribe, had to struggle in his early years to retain the leadership of his clan. By the year 1206, he had succeeded in unifying the Mongol tribes and had taken the title Genghiz Khan. Successful raids into northern China followed and the northern Chinese Empire was brought under his sway by the year 1215. From the Chinese, Genghiz acquired the latest technology of the day in tunnel engineering, siege engines, defensive silk armor and most important, gunpowder.

Relations between Genghiz Khan and Alauddin were at first friendly, although skirmishes had taken place in Sinkiang between the forces of the two empires over succession issues of the local princes. However, a fateful turn of events took place in 1218. Genghiz bought stock in the goods of three Khiva merchants and with them sent Mongol representatives to obtain Khorasani products. Nasiruddin, the governor of the frontier province of Otrar, suspected that the Mongols were spies and asked the permission of Alauddin to execute them. The permission was granted and the merchants were slain. Furious, Genghiz sent an ambassador to Nasiruddin and

demanded retribution. With the haughtiness and self-delusion that has so often characterized Muslim interfaces with other civilizations, Nasiruddin put the envoy to death. This was an insult that Genghiz Khan could not tolerate. The drums of war were beaten.

Genghiz gathered the Mongol tribes and preparations for war began. Great conquerors pay as much attention to the detailed preparations for war as to the strategies of war itself. Men, horses and supplies were carefully planned and the great mountains of Central Asia were successfully crossed in the winter of 1218-1219. Genghiz was a general par excellence. The first skirmish between Alauddin and the Mongols took place at Otrar on the Amu Darya. The outcome was indecisive. But the Sultan, in his characteristic haughtiness, declared victory, distributed presents to his troops and retired towards Samarqand.

It was at this historic moment that Alauddin Muhammed made a strategic military blunder. He divided up his armies into two main columns and sent smaller contingents to fortify the cities in the Farghana Valley. He thought that the Mongols would withdraw after looting border areas and thus chose a defensive strategy to protect his cities. This gave Genghiz the initiative to focus overwhelming military power at any given geographical point without the risk of facing the full might of the Shah's forces.

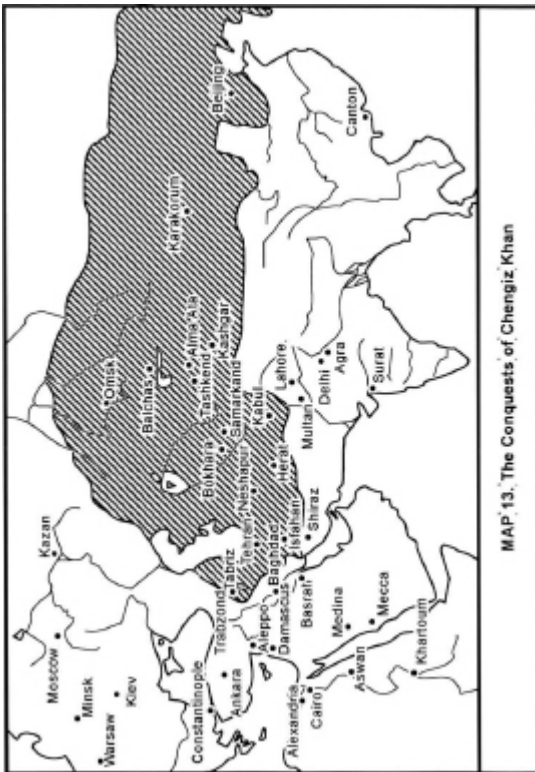
The contrast between Genghiz Khan and Alauddin Muhammed was as marked as it ever was between two generals who have squared off against each other. Genghiz was a warrior, cruel, merciless, relentless, master of deception but who led his armies with the skill becoming of a great conqueror. Alauddin, by contrast was lacking in skills both of tactics and strategy and was a coward who fled with his own men without giving battle. Genghiz always gathered intelligence about his adversaries before combat. Alauddin knew nothing of his mortal enemy but provoked him into war. This was a civilizational encounter wherein the Mongols had the advantage of technology, skills, intelligence, tactics and leadership. The Sultan, by contrast, demonstrated a fatalistic self-delusion and knew nothing of the technologies, skills, tactics, motivation or capabilities of his enemies.

Genghiz followed up his assault on one city after another. In the year 1219 the cities of Otrar, Jhand, Khokand, Bukhara, Samarqand and Signac fell one after the other. In each city the pattern was similar. Men, women and children were slaughtered except those needed as slaves for work

during the military campaigns. Agricultural land was turned into grazing ground for Mongol horses and the cities were razed to the ground.

Dams were destroyed, libraries burned, mosques demolished and learned men tortured to death. Shah Alauddin Muhammed fled before the Mongols and was hunted from city to city. During the year 1220, Balkh, Nishapur, Ghazna as well as the provinces of Kuchan, Isfahan and Damghan fell. The Shah finally escaped to an island in the Caspian Sea where he died a pauper, leaving a legacy of cowardice rarely matched in Islamic history.

The Mongol armies split up and rampaged through central and western Persia, Afghanistan and northwest India. Only one valiant prince, Jalaluddin, had the backbone to stand up to the marauding invaders. Jalaluddin, the third son of the Shah, fought the Mongols at every turn and on one occasion in 1220, inflicted a defeat upon a Mongol division in Afghanistan. Pressed further by the Mongols, the Prince retreated eastward and took a stand by the Indus River near Attock. With the great river to his back and a high ridge to his left, Jalaluddin charged like a lion towards the Mongol center where Genghiz Khan was stationed. He succeeded in reaching the spot. But man plans and God disposes. Despite the most well thought-out human plans, the outcome of great wars is a moment of Divine intercession. As providence would have it, Genghiz had dismounted his horse at that moment and had gone off to attend to other matters. Genghiz escaped and



the wheels of history turned. Jalaluddin's bodyguard was cut to pieces. Desperate, the undaunted prince plunged his horse from a ridge into the Indus and as he swam the great river towards Hindustan, Genghiz is said to have exclaimed: "Proud should be a mother who bore such a son!"

By 1222, when Genghiz finally retreated towards Mongolia, he had destroyed what are today the states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tadzhikistan, Persia, Afghanistan and western Pakistan. The great cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, Herat, Ghazna, Kabul and Neshapur were razed to the ground. In the words of Ibn Kathir, not even one hundredth of the population of the area survived. This was only the beginning. After the death of Genghiz Khan, the Mongols continued their advance into west Asia and central Europe, destroying whatever lay before them and reshaping the destinies of Asia and Europe alike.

Thus it was that in the first two decades of the 13th century, the opening gambit of the great geopolitical game between the worlds of Islam, Medieval Christianity and the Mongols was played and the stage was set for the global struggles that were to follow in the latter part of the century.

The Fall of Baghdad

Genghiz Khan died in 1227. Upon his death, his vast empire was divided up into five parts: (1) Mongolistan consisting of the Mongol home turf, (2) Chagtai, consisting of Khorasan and Farghana Valley, (3) Persia, ruled by the Il-Khans, (4) Russia and Kazakhstan, ruled by the Golden Hordes and (5) China. The Mongols continued their advance after Genghiz. In 1229, they planned three great expeditions. The first was to complete the conquest of southern China. This effort was not completed until 1276 during the reign of Kublai Khan. The second expedition was to complete the conquest of southern Russia, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. The Mongols were successful in this campaign and ruled these territories for over two hundred years. The third expedition under General Chormagun was against Prince Jalaluddin of Khorasan.

After crossing the Indus at the Battle of Attock in 1221, Jalaluddin sought refuge with Altumish, the able Mamluke Sultan of Delhi. But Altumish knew the risks associated with giving refuge to a foe of Genghiz. Although he was treated with the dignity befitting a prince, Jalaluddin knew that his welcome mat in Delhi was very thin. In 1223, he returned to Isfahan via Sindh and Makran, suffering the ravages of that inhospitable desert, much as Alexander had done fifteen centuries earlier. Soon, with the help of his brother, Jalaluddin was in possession of what was left of Khorasan, Mazanderan and Iraq. In 1225, he marched against the Caliph Al Nasir to seek revenge against an enemy of his father. The armies of the Caliph were routed and Baghdad was besieged. Jalaluddin continued his march into Georgia and occupied Tiflis in 1226. This infuriated the Georgians who made an alliance with the Mongols and the Russian Kipchaks against Jalaluddin.

Jalaluddin now had to face the combined armies of the Georgians, the Russian Kipchaks and the Mongols. At the Battle of Isfahan in 1227, he defeated the Mongols. His strategy in war was to face the Mongols in the open field and to avoid the pitfalls of his father who had tried to hole himself up in one fort after another. This gave him the advantage of

mobility and rapid enveloping movements, tactics that the Central Asian horsemen were masters of. In 1229, he made peace with the new Caliph Al Muntasir (1226-1242). But now his good fortune ran out. The Mongol armies of Charmagun caught him unprepared on the Moghan plains (1230) and Jalaluddin narrowly escaped with his life. Shortly thereafter a Kurdish robber assassinated him.

Thus perished the bravest of Muslim soldiers who was the only one amongst the kings and princes of his era, Muslim or Christian, to face the Mongol hordes in open combat and defeat them on several occasions. Brilliant as he was in war, Jalaluddin suffered from a lack of organizational skills required of a statesman. He was always restless, moving from battle to battle. It would have taken a combination of his prowess with the wisdom of a Nizam ul Mulk (d. 1091) to contain the fierce Mongols.

In the meantime, the devastation of Khwarazm continued. The Mongols revisited the cities and provinces they had already destroyed and what was left after the invasions of Genghiz Khan was devastated once again. In 1251, Mangu was elected the Chief Khan of all Mongols. His first act was to launch two expeditions, one under his brother Kublai Khan to conquer southern China and the other under Hulagu Khan to bring an end to the Caliphate in Baghdad. On both counts, the Mongols were successful.

Hulagu established himself in Isfahan and methodically moved to eliminate all resistance. His first objective was the Assassins who posed a potential threat to his rear guard. Hulagu knew that the Assassins, an offshoot of the Fatimid sect, were a major factor in the instability of the Muslim world during the 11th and 12th centuries and had terrorized successive Muslim dynasties by assassinating generals, viziers and sultans alike. It was the dagger of an assassin that had brought to an end the life of the brilliant vizier, Nizam ul Mulk (1091). During the year 1256, Hulagu attacked the hideouts of the Assassins, eliminating them one after the other.

In the winter of 1257, Hulagu moved towards Baghdad. A defacto alliance was formed between the Christian powers and the Mongols to eliminate Islam. The Crusaders and the Armenians attacked in northern Syria diverting some of the Turkish contingents that might have been available for the defense of Baghdad. Al Musta'sim was no military match for Hulagu. Suffering from the same kind of fatalistic self-delusion that had characterized the encounter of Shah Muhammed of Khwarazm with

Genghiz Khan, Al Musta'sim failed to organize an effective defense of the capital. The treasury of the Caliph that could have been used to raise a large army remained closed. Hulagu sent a summons to Caliph Musta'sim to surrender. When the Caliph refused, Hulagu laid siege to the Abbasid capital and methodically moved to reduce it.

In June 1258, the city of Baghdad surrendered. No description can do justice to the horrors that followed. The sack of Baghdad lasted a week. More than a million inhabitants were slaughtered. Al Musta'sim was wrapped in a carpet, beaten with clubs and tramped to death by Mongol horses. Mosques were pulled down. Libraries burned. Great men of learning were tortured to death. Artisans were enslaved. Women were dragged, abused and left to die along far-away roads. The dams on the Tigris and the Euphrates that the Abbasids had built up over a period of five centuries were demolished. The destruction of dams throughout Central Asia depressed agriculture and slowed population and economic recovery for many centuries. Baghdad, which was once the premier city of the world, became a ghost town.

The fall of Baghdad marked a major event in world history. With it, the curtain fell on the classic Islamic period. Baghdad had been founded and established by the Abbasids as the capital of orthodox Islam after Madina and Damascus. It was the seat of the Caliphate and the vortex of Islamic political life. It was to Baghdad that kings and sultans alike turned, seeking legitimacy for their temporal power and guidance on spiritual matters. With the demolition of the Caliphate in Baghdad, Muslims had to reinvent that institution so that the temporal and spiritual life of Islam might continue to have a focus.

Hulagu established himself in Hamadan from where he organized more expeditions. All of Iraq was subjugated. Aleppo in northern Syria fell in 1260 to the combined onslaught of Mongol, Armenian and Crusader armies. Palestine lay ahead and held the key to Egypt and the cities of Mecca and Madina. Only the Ganges plains of India escaped the Mongol conquests thanks to the statesmanship of Altumish and his daughter Razia Sultana. The hour was dark indeed. It appeared that the light of Islam that had been lit six hundred years earlier might be physically extinguished.

The classic Islamic civilization was the light that had kept learning, art and culture alive for 600 years while Europe lay in the stupor of its Dark

Ages. This civilization, even in its waning years, was at once spiritual and empirical, absorbing and transforming the best that the ancient civilizations of Greece, India, Persia and Egypt had to offer. After the fall of Baghdad, Islam went through a self-renewal. It turned increasingly inward, towards tasawwuf and the sciences of the soul. It was this sufic Islam that was to conquer the conquering Mongols, win the hearts of millions in India, Indonesia and Africa and shape the destiny of three continents for the next 400 years.

Thus it was in the year 1258 that a civilization died even as it renewed and expressed itself on a different plane.

The Battle of Ayn Jalut

Not since the Battle of Badr had the Muslim world stood face to face with extinction as it did at the Battle of Ayn Jalut. Just as the Prophet had triumphed at Badr 600 years earlier, the Mamlukes triumphed over the combined armies of the Mongols, the Crusaders and the Armenians at the Battle of Ayn Jalut. The Muslim world survived by a margin that was as small as any allowed by history to any civilization.

As the Mongols turned back from central Europe after overrunning Hungary and Poland, it became obvious to the Christian powers that Western Europe was safe. At the Council of Lyons (1245) they resolved to seek an alliance with the Mongols against the Muslims. In 1246, one of the delegations under John de Plano Carpini reached Korakorum, the Mongol capital and made representations to Kuyuk, the Great Khan. Two of Kuyuk's ministers were Christian and John was received cordially. A second delegation under Anselm, a Dominican priest, was dispatched in 1247. Louis, King of France, sent a third delegation under William of Rubruquis in 1253. Hayton, King of Armenia, represented himself and traveled to Korakorum in 1254.

The Christian overtures to the Mongols paid off and were rewarded with promises of military help. The Christian population in the major cities was spared even as the Mongols continued to slaughter the Muslims. For instance, while Baghdad was ravaged and pulled to the ground, the Christian populace of Baghdad gathered under the local cathedral and was spared. Hulagu, the destroyer of Baghdad, had several wives, of whom Dokuz Khatun, a Nestorian Christian, was his chief wife. So enthralled were the Christians at their initial success, that

Pope Alexander IV wrote to Hulagu in 1260, expressing his pleasure that the latter was disposed to accept the Christian faith.

The news of the fall of Baghdad (1258) was received with great joy in Christendom who saw in it an opportunity to redress the loss of Jerusalem. It was during this period that the Fatimid Assassins sent a delegation to

Henry III of England asking for his help to protect them from the Mongols. The reply from the Bishop of Winchester was curt: "Let those dogs devour each other and be utterly wiped out and then we shall see, founded on their ruins, the universal Catholic Church".

The Christian-Mongol axis continued its aggression against Muslim territories. While the Mongols devastated Asia, the Crusaders continued their onslaught on the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. In 1218, a German army invaded Egypt, occupied Damietta and proceeded towards Cairo. The Egyptians allowed the invaders to enter the delta, then opened the dykes on the Nile, trapping and drowning the German army. In 1261, the French attempted an invasion of North Africa, while Spain and Portugal were militarily active on the Moroccan coast.

Meanwhile, Hulagu followed up the sack of Baghdad with the capture of Iraq and Syria. After consulting with his astrologers, he established his base in Maragha. The Atabeg Seljuk Shah was captured near Shiraz and beheaded. In 1260, Aleppo was stormed and its population was put to death. Damascus surrendered without a fight. The Mongol commander Kitbogha, the Armenian King Hayton and the Crusader King Bohemund of Antioch marched together in the streets of the ancient Umayyad capital and forced the Muslim inhabitants of the city to kneel before the cross. Summons was issued to Kutuz, the Mamluke Sultan of Egypt to surrender or face annihilation.

The choices before the Mamlukes were stark indeed. They knew that either surrender or a loss in battle would mean annihilation and the last bastion of Islamic culture would be destroyed (Although Delhi was as yet safe from the Mongols, Islam had barely established itself on the plains of Hindustan by the year 1260). Jerusalem, Mecca and Madina would be taken. Summons went forth from Sultan Kutuz for a jihad under General Bayars. The response was overwhelming and a motivated

Muslim army advanced through the Sinai towards Palestine to meet the invaders.

The Mamlukes were a Turkish tribe who had made their home in the islands of the Nile. Hence, they are sometimes called Bahri Mamlukes. The word Mamluke derives its origin from the word Malaka (to own). During the 9th and 10th centuries, slave trade was brisk along the River Volga (in

today's Russia) and around the Caspian Sea. The Vikings (Swedes) were the primary vehicles for this trade. In the 9th and 10th centuries, the Vikings were the imperial power around the Baltic Sea. They conducted raids deep into what are today Russia and Germany, as well as the Slavic lands of the Balkans, captured slaves and sold them to Jewish and Muslim merchants. These slaves were adopted by the Turkish sultans, often married princesses of the royal households and rose to become rulers themselves. Thus it was that the transcendence of Islam elevated slaves to kings. In the 13th century both Egypt and India were ruled by Mamluke (slave) dynasties.

The armies of Baybars met the combined armies of the Mongols, the Crusaders and the Armenians near Nazareth at Ain Jalut in September 1261. A great battle ensued. The Mamluke right flank charged against the invaders and forced it back. But the Mongols counterattacked on the left and the Mamlukes hesitated. General Baybars took charge and a battle cry went forth for the defense of Islam. The enemies were routed. Kitbogha was killed. Hayton, King of Armenia and Bohemund, King of Antioch fled. The Mongols were pursued to Aleppo and destroyed. Egypt and with it Hejaz and Palestine were saved. The dark spell that the Mongols had cast across the Eurasian continent was broken.

Ain Jalut was undoubtedly one of the decisive battles in human history, comparable in its importance with the Battle of Tours (765) and the Battle of Plassey (1757). It marked the farthest advance of the Mongols across Eurasia. With the defeat at Ain Jalut, Christendom lost its hope for recovery of Jerusalem and its hold on the Syrian coastline was made untenable. The Armenians receded to their mountain strongholds in the Caucasus Mountains. Had the Mamlukes lost, Cairo would have met the same fate as Baghdad, the Cross would have supplanted the Crescent and the shamanist Mongol would have ruled over the sacred sites of Mecca and Madina.

Upon his return from Ayn Jalut, Baybars displaced Sultan Kutuz, invited a relative of slain Caliph Al Musta'sim to Cairo and re-established the Abbasid Caliphate in Egypt. There the temporal seat of Sunni Islam stayed, until it was displaced by the Ottomans in 1517 and moved to Istanbul.

The Conversion of Ghazan the Great

The Mamluke victory at the Battle of Ayn Jalut stopped the Mongol advance and ushered in a new struggle between Christianity and Islam to convert the conquering Mongols. In the last third of the 13th century, the geopolitics of Eurasia was dominated by this struggle.

The Christians played the initial gambit in this geopolitical chess game and sent missionaries to the Mongol rulers to convert them (1245-1270). No doubt some of this zeal was motivated by the loss of Jerusalem to Salahuddin (1187) and the inability of the Crusaders to recapture Palestine. But other methods were used as well. Christian wives were offered to the heathen Mongols to gain favor. Dokuz Khatun, the chief wife of Hulagu, was a Christian. Mary, a daughter of Emperor Paleologus, was sent as a bride to Hulagu Khan. Hulagu died (1265) before Mary arrived at the Mongol court, so she married his son Abaga (1265-1281).

There was also an internal struggle between the Mongols themselves. The Khans of Russia had accepted Islam and a struggle ensued between the Muslim Khans of Russia and the shamanist Khans of Persia. At the Battle of Kur in Georgia, the Russians were forced to withdraw. But the real challenge to Abaga came from Egypt. Baybars, Sultan of Egypt, followed up his victory at Ayn Jalut with a campaign against the invading Armenians and Crusaders. Syria was cleared of the Crusaders and Armenia was forced to surrender several cities in northern Iraq. Baybars pursued his enemies and met up with the

Mongols at Abulistan in 1277. A fierce battle ensued. Baybar's army was animated with faith and sought the recovery of the Muslim heartland. The Mongols were defeated and half of their army was decimated. Baybars died in Damascus the following year. His death touched off a brief struggle for succession in Cairo. Abaga, sensing an opportunity, marched against the Egyptians but was soundly defeated at the Battle of Hims (1281).

Abaga was an avowed enemy of the Muslims and sought an alliance with the Christian powers for a joint attack on the Egyptians. Abaga died in 1284 and his brother Tagadur ascended the throne of the Il-Khans. Although the Christians had baptized him under the name Nicolas, Tagadur accepted Islam and changed his name to Ahmed. Prince Ahmed sought friendly relations with the Mamlukes of Egypt, which were reciprocated. However, the triangular struggle between the Mongols, the Christians and the Muslims was not over yet. Many in his army were unhappy with Ahmed for his friendliness towards the Muslims. He was dethroned and Arghun, the son of Abaga was made the ruler.

Arghun, like his father Abaga, was a bitter enemy of Islam and made several proposals to Christian kings for a joint attack on the Muslims. But before an attack could be mounted, Acre the last stronghold of the Crusaders in Palestine, fell to the Mamlukes (1289). With its fall the fate of the Crusaders in west Asia was sealed. Arghun died in 1291 and a struggle for succession followed.

In 1295 Ghazan Khan ascended the throne of the Il-Khans and proclaimed himself a Muslim monarch. With his conversion, Islam won the battle for the soul of the Mongols. This victory was decisive. From now on Asia would belong to Islam. Christianity was to be relegated to the west.

The accession of Ghazan did not bring to an end the rivalry between the Mamlukes and the Il-Khans. A struggle ensued for the control of the Syrian highlands. Ghazan briefly occupied Damascus but this time the occupation was done in the name of the Qur'an. Ultimately however, the Mamlukes prevailed at the Battle of Marju-as-Suffar (1301). Syria remained closely tied to Egypt rather than to Persia. Ghazan's armies retreated east of the Tigris.

Ghazan is known in history as the first Great Mongol Khan who attempted to introduce administrative reforms in his empire and to rebuild Persia, Iraq and Central Asia after the devastations of the previous century. A man of piety and good sense, he reduced taxation, reformed the revenue system, helped the peasantry, founded a postal system, organized the administration of justice and punished the Mongol bandits who had roamed the countryside since the days of Genghiz Khan. The Il-Khani era, which began on March 14, 1302, is recognized as a landmark in the benevolent administration of Persia and the Central Asian republics.

Ghazan made Tabriz his capital and adorned it with some of the finest buildings of the era. Utilizing the legacy of Pre-Genghiz artisans, he built a magnificent jamia masjid, founded several universities and invited many of the scholars of the age to teach there. He built roads, hospitals and an astronomical observatory, which was one of the finest in the world. Stipends were offered for advanced studies and the study of Farsi and Arabic was encouraged. Geometry, art, astronomy, architecture and Farsi literature thrived. The Persian highlands once again became a center for Islamic learning.

Ghazan's conversion provides a benchmark in the history of the Muslim peoples. With the conversion of Ghazan and the consolidation of his power in Persia, the geographical divide between the Mediterranean world and Central Asia was reestablished at the Euphrates River, just as it was at the time of Caliphs Amin and Mamun. For 500 years prior to the Mongol invasions, the Arabic language dominated Islamic learning. The scholars in far-away Farghana as well as Andalus wrote in Arabic. The 75 years between Genghiz and Ghazan (1218-1295) was a period of trial during which the fate of the Muslim world hung in the balance. The fall of Baghdad (1258) was the mid-point of this period of trial. With the conversion of Ghazan, a new era dawned and the initiative passed on to the Farsi-speaking peoples. The Mongol invasions had exterminated the urban populations of Central Asia and Persia, including the Arabic-speaking elite. Rural sheikhs who survived the slaughter were more at home with Farsi.

After the 14th century, Farsi became the lingua franca for the Muslims of Asia even while Arabic remained the language of prayer and the sacred scriptures. Sufi masters such as Rumi, poets such Sa'adi, Hafiz, Jami and modern writers such as Muhammed Iqbal wrote in Persian. The Ottomans, Safavids and the Moghuls as well as lesser dynasties in the Indian Deccan used Farsi as their court language. Sufi thought profoundly influenced the Farsi language as well as modern languages such as Turkish, Urdu, Pushtu and Malay. These observations illustrate a major difference in the historical experience of the Muslims of non-Arab Asia as compared to that of the Arab heartland. Whereas the former is more "spiritual", the latter emphasize Fiqh and Shariah. The differences in the historical experience of Arabs and non-Arabs might explain some of the misunderstandings that arise when

Muslims from different parts of the world interact in a melting pot like America.

Islam had conquered the conquerors. The Mongols, along with their cousins the Turks and the Tatars, became the champions of Islam in the succeeding centuries and carried it to India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Africa. But this Islam was different in its approach to the transcendent from the Islam of the classical Islamic era. It was more spiritual and less ritualistic, more intuitive and less empirical and it arrived in the new lands with the great sufi shaykhs of the era.

THE SPIRIT CONQUERS THE SWORD

Summary

The Mongol devastations transformed Islamic civilization. Gone was the empirical, exoteric Islam of the Omayyads and the Abbasids. In its place, there emerged a folk Islam, deeply influenced by tasawwuf. The sciences of the soul took predominance over the sciences of nature. Great suf shaykhs emerged and established the foundations of a new civilization. It was this sufic Islam, with its focus on the soul rather than the mind, which was carried by the sages into India, Pakistan, Indonesia, eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Millions embraced the spirituality of Islam and the center of gravity of the Islamic world shifted from Cairo and Damascus to Lahore, Calcutta and Kuala Lumpur.

The Triumph of the Awliya

The word *sufi* literally means a practitioner of *tasawwuf*, a term that derives from the Arabic root *s-w-f*, meaning purity. In the context of *tasawwuf*, it means purity of heart. A second meaning derives from the word *suf*, meaning wool. The Prophet sometimes wore a blanket of wool and hence the word *suf* harkens back to a connection with the Prophetic tradition. A deeper connotation for *suf* comes from its association with *Fatimat uz Zahra*, beloved daughter of the Prophet, who is known to have knit wool. Just as a weaver takes strands of wool and knits a woolen robe from it, so does *tasawwuf* integrate a holistic worldview from the disjointed inputs of mundane life. In *sufi* terminology, the “knitting work of *Fatima*” connotes purification and molding of the soul and its integration into a holistic self. A third meaning of the word *tasawwuf* derives from *Ahl as saff*, or people of the first rank, those who have distinguished themselves through self-purification, love of the Prophet and selfless service of humankind.

Tasawwuf grew in the cradle of Islam and was not imported from the Greeks or the Buddhists as some modern writers profess. Most *sufis* trace their spirituality to the Prophet through *Ali ibn Abu Talib* and some trace it through *Abu Bakr as Siddiq*. *Abu Dhar al Ghifari* (d. 652), a companion of the Prophet, was a well-known *sufi*. In functional usage, *tasawwuf* means intuitive and immediate spiritual knowledge of the love of God. The *sufis* express this love through constant remembrance of God (*dhikr*), selfless service, sublime poetry, devotional songs, ecstatic music, lyrics replete with longing for divine love and a renunciation of worldly gains. Whatever be the origin of the word, there is no question that *tasawwuf* runs like a mighty river throughout Islamic history, turning its vast landscape into a veritable spiritual garden. In the all too checkered history of Muslims, often punctuated by disagreement, rancor, warfare and mayhem, *tasawwuf* is one common stream that has drawn freely from all segments of Muslim thought

—Sunni, Shi'a, Fatimid, Zaidi and others. Besides the Shariah and the Sunnah of the Prophet, tasawwuf is the only amalgam that has melted and molded together different groups among the Muslims.

Spirituality is innate to Islam. The Prophet himself was an embodiment of this spirituality. His legacy was passed on to the Suhaba (Companions of the Prophet) and after them to the Tabiyeen (those who learned from the Companions) and the Tab e Tabiyeen (those who learned from the Tabeyeen). Successive generations kept this tradition alive. In the first centuries of Islam, as the wealth and opulence of the ruling classes increased, a revulsion to the worldliness of the courts set in among some of the scholars. Among the notable sufis of early Islam were Hassan al Basri (d. 728), Rabia al Adawiya (d. 802) and Mansur al Hallaj (d. 922). However, tasawwuf as a discipline ran as a sub-stream in the social milieu and did not come into its own until the 11th century. By contrast, the sciences of Fiqh were codified and institutionalized in the 8th and 9th centuries and the sciences of hadith were well established by the 10th century.

Throughout the 11th, 12th and 13 th centuries, historical currents moved inexorably in favor of the suffis. Al Gazzali (d. 1111), through his eloquent writings, bestowed respectability to tasawwuf and brought it squarely into the mainstream of Islam. He took issue with the theologians, the philosophers and the Fatimids and showed that tasawwuf was the only mode through which certainty of knowledge could be assured. In Tahaffuz alFilasafa, he repudiated the rational (philosophical) approach to knowledge as insufficient and inadequate in arriving at the truth. In Ihya Ulum al Din, he argued against the esoteric approach of the Fatimids and their search for an infallible and invisible leader. At the other end of the spectrum, the theologians relied solely on a prosaic interpretation of texts without understanding their spiritual underpinnings. True knowledge, argued Al Gazzali, comes only from illumination of the soul after it has been cleansed.

Tasawwuf grew its roots and had solidified its position in the Islamic world when the Mongol cataclysm descended upon it. Genghiz Khan and his successors destroyed a civilization. Centers of learning and culture like Bukhara, Samarqand, Nishapur, Herat and Baghdad were obliterated. The Islamic heartland extending from Bukhara to Baghdad was depopulated. According to Ibn Kathir, the number of people killed in and around

Baghdad itself exceeded one million. Entire regions became depopulated. Dams were destroyed. Agriculture perished. Cities became grazing land. Books were thrown into the Tigris River. Libraries were burned. Mosques were demolished. Men of learning were slaughtered. In summary, the curtain fell on the classical Islamic civilization.

With its political power destroyed and culture decimated, Islam turned inwards to its spiritual roots. It was the sufis who kept the lamp of faith shining in the darkness of the 13th century. The Mongols killed the rulers, destroyed the libraries, enslaved the scholars, but their sword could not touch the heart of the sufi. The sufis persisted, fought a battle of the soul with the Christians and won it with the conversion of Ghazan the Great of Persia (1295). In small cells and in far-away hideouts, the fire of faith continued to burn and when the darkness lifted, it was these small fires that became beacon lights and carried the message of Tawhid to the far corners of India, Pakistan, Indonesia and eastern Europe, transforming the social landscape of Eurasia and profoundly influencing the course of global events. Over a span of more than a thousand years, tasawwuf provided the guiding principle for reform in the far-flung corners of the Islamic world as well as the cutting edge for political movements. If the center of gravity of the Muslim world today is closer to Singapore than to Cairo, it is due not so much to the power of the Sultans or the preaching of the mullahs, but to the spiritual approach of the sufi shaykhs.

In the generation that experienced the Mongol deluge, one finds a grim determination not only to survive but also to serve and expand the sphere of faith. The genius of the age expressed itself through spirituality. Sufi tareeqas grew up everywhere and provided the life raft for Muslims in their darkest hour. Among the ones that have left a lasting imprint on history were the orders founded by Shaykh Abdul Qadir al Jeelani (Baghdad, d. 1166), Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti (Ajmer, India d. 1236), Ziauddin Jahib Suhrwardi (Baghdad, circa 1150), Ali al Shadhuli (Egypt, d. 1258), Jalaluddin Rumi (Turkey, d. 1273) and Khwaja Bahauddin Nakhshband (Bukhara, d. 1386). Ibn al Arabi (d. 1240) introduced sufi thought into Spain about this same time. The Qadariya Order spread throughout the Muslim world and profoundly influenced religious, social and political movements. The Chishti order was the major instrument in introducing Islam in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Ibn al Arabi's writings influenced

the development of tasawwuf the world over. The Shadhuliya School found its followers in Egypt, Syria, Malaysia, East Africa and North Africa. Jalaluddin Rumi's Mawlawiyya order influenced the Turks and the Europeans. The resilience of Islam, manifest in its spiritual dimension, not only absorbed the shock of the Mongol invasions, it ultimately succeeded in converting the Mongols themselves to Islam.

While not compromising on the Shariah or the Sunnah of the Prophet, tasawwuf melted together Islamic spirituality with local cultures and evolved a folk Islam that spread through the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, Indonesia and deep into Africa. The history of these regions cannot be understood unless the spiritual dimension of Islam is kept in mind. Many of the movements that sprang up to reform the sufic bent of the Muslim masses were themselves strongly rooted in sufic thought. Examples are the reform movements of Ibn Taymiyah (Syria, d. 1326), Ahmed Sirhindi (India, d. 1615), Muhammed al Sanusi (Libya, d. 1859) and al Mahdi (Sudan, d. 1885).

The triumph of the Awliya (sages; friends of God; great sufis) must be looked at in its historical context. The Afghans had conquered Hindustan (1292) only 25 years before Genghiz Khan's invasion of Central Asia. Islam had only gained a toehold in the Indonesian islands when Hulagu destroyed Baghdad (1258). The Islam that entered India and the Far East was less the didactic Islam of the ulema, but more the spiritual Islam of the sufi. Specifically, sufi movements profoundly influenced the eastern lands of Islam, constituting what are today Persia, Pakistan, Turkey, Central Asia, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia as well as the West African nations south of the Sahara. In the core regions of the Arab world, which escaped conquest and devastation by the Mongols thanks to the victory at Ayn Jalut (1261), sufi influence was less pronounced and the area remained faithful to the legacy of classical Islam, with a heavier emphasis on the Shariah and political legitimacy. For instance, the ghazi spirit of the Ottomans in the 14th and 15th centuries was deeply animated by Bektashi, Naqshbandi and Qadariya influence. Uthman dan Fuduye (d. 1817), who led a struggle to establish Islamic rule in West Africa was a follower of the Qadariya sufi order. Abdel Qader al Jazairi, a Qadariya Shaykh, led the resistance to French occupation of Algeria (1840). Shamayl Daghestani who resisted Russian occupation of the northern Caucasus in the 1840s was a

Nakhshbandi Shaykh. Shaykh al Hajj Umar Tal led the resistance to French occupation of Senegal and Mali (1860). As late as 1911, it was the Sanusi movement in North Africa that resisted the colonial invasion by Italy. Even in modern times, sufi orders continue to provide the leadership for national independence movements in many of the non-Arab Islamic regions. As an illustration, for over a century, the resistance to Russian rule in the Caucasus has been led by the Naqshbandi order. By contrast, in the 18th century, the battle cry of the Wahhabi movement in Arabia was strict adherence to the Shariah. Modern day Islamic movements in Egypt and Algeria are animated by a call to rule by the Shariah and political legitimacy.

The sufis “conquered” India, Africa and Indonesia and profoundly influenced the politics, language, art, music and culture of the Muslim peoples of the east. The spirituality of the sufis was uniquely suited to the ancient Asian mind. Hindus and Buddhists alike entered the fold of Islam in droves. Thus it was that Khwaja Moeenuddin of Ajmer, Baba Fareeduddin of Punjab, Khwaja Khutbuddin of Deccan and Nizamuddin Awliya of Delhi made a more lasting impact on the Indian subcontinent than did Mahmud of Ghazna or Alauddin Khilji. The asceticism of Indonesian Buddhism found sufic Islam to be more acceptable than the pedantic recitations of mullahs. The animist soul of

Africa resonated to the drumbeat of tasawwuf and Africans entered Islam by the millions.

The impact of tasawwuf on subsequent developments in politics, music and culture was no less profound. The Safavid dynasty originated as a sufi movement. Babur, the first Moghul Emperor, was an avid sufi as is manifest from his Babur Namah. The early Ottomans were the “Ghazis of Rum”, many of whom followed the Naqshbandi Order. The Moghul emperors Akbar and Jehangir were devout followers of Shaykh Salim Chisti. The Chishtis and the Nakhbandis profoundly influenced Hindustani music marrying devotional singing with classical ragas, as in Qawwali, Naat, Hamd and Ghazals. It is a tribute to the universal genius of Shaykh Jalaluddin Rumi that he is perhaps the most widely read poet in North America today.

Despite its historical triumphs, the absence of empirical criteria opened up sufism to abuse. In the 18 th century, accompanying a general political

and social decay of Muslim societies, spirituality and ethics also suffered. Just as religion devoid of spirituality degenerates into rituals, spirituality devoid of the Shariah degenerates into egoism and pantheism. This inherent weakness of the spiritual approach was the target of movements such as the Wahhabi movement in Arabia and the movement of Shah Waliullah of Delhi in India in the 18 th century. The French exploited this weakness in the twentieth century to foster deviant sufi practices in West Africa as a means of confusing the Muslim resistance movements. However, it must be kept in mind that the abuse of tasawwuf was not the cause but a result of the political and social decay of the Muslims. In spite of such abuses, tasawwuf cannot be dismissed as an aberration in the spectrum of Islamic teachings. It has to be accepted as a mainstream Islamic activity if the historical dimensions of Islam are to be understood. Indeed, it was the principal mechanism in the movement of Islam during the last eight hundred years.

Tasawwuf was the dynamic force that rescued Islam in its gravest hour, conquered the Mongols and propelled the faith deep into Asia, Europe and Africa. Today, it is in the spirituality of Islam that Muslims search for answers to the global challenge of an agnostic world civilization.

The Sufis of India and Pakistan

In the words of Muhammed Iqbal, the philosopher-poet of India-Pakistan, Islam is like a balloon. When it is squeezed in one direction, it bulges out in another. Within a hundred years after Genghis Khan, Islam conquered the conquerors. The Mongols who had destroyed Bukhara and Baghdad themselves became the standard bearers of the new faith. The westward thrust of Islam carried it into Europe. To the east, it put down new roots in India and Indonesia. The center of gravity of the Islamic world shifted from Cairo and Damascus to Lahore and Kuala Lumpur.

After the conquest of Sindh by Muhammed bin Qasim in 711, the borders between the Baghdad Caliphate and India were relatively stable for 500 years. Islam made limited inroads into the subcontinent along the coast of Malabar in southern India and in southern Pakistan. Political Islam had reached equilibrium and was preoccupied as much with internal debates as with external threats. For almost 200 years, Fatimid chieftains controlled Multan and Sindh. Propagation of the faith took second place to the global struggle between the Sunnis and the Fatimids and later between the Muslims and the Crusaders. This situation changed towards the end of the 12 th century with the dissolution of the Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo (1171), the defeat of the Crusaders at the Battle of Hittin (1186) and the conquest of Delhi by Muhammed Ghori (1192).

The Islamic penetration of the subcontinent accelerated in the 13 th century. Several reasons may be cited for this change. First, the establishment of the Delhi sultanate enabled Muslim scholars and traders to travel freely throughout India under the protection of the political authorities. Second, India was a beneficiary of the Mongol invasions (1219-1261) that devastated Central Asia and Persia. Many noted scholars fled the Mongols into the security of Hindustan. Third and perhaps the most important element, was the establishment of sufi orders throughout the vast subcontinent. Indeed, Islam spread in India and Pakistan not by the force of

conquest or the elaborate arguments of mullahs and kadis but through the work of the great sufi shaykhs. In this respect, Muslim India is different from the Arab countries where Islam was introduced during the classical period (665-1258) through the work of the muhaddithin and the mujahideen.

The process by which a faith enters the hearts of the believers has a profound impact on the way religion is felt and followed by them. In the Arab experience, the solidification of Islamic life took place during the imperial days of the Baghdad Caliphate and was tilted heavily in favor of the exoteric aspects of religion. By contrast, the Indo-Pakistanis, Indonesians and Africans were exposed more to the esoteric and spiritual dimension of Islam.

The sufi shaykhs of the 13th century were not missionaries. They were not merchants of faith peddling their religion. They were men drunk with the love of God, giving of themselves for no gain but the prospect of divine pleasure, serving humanity irrespective of creed or nationality and sharing their spiritual bounty with whoever would partake of it. Proselytizing was not their goal; it was a byproduct of their selfless service. The sufi way strove to mend human behavior and to open up human vistas to the sublime peace that comes from proximity to God. Their “miracles” were the transformations of human hearts. The Muslims needed this spirituality as much as did the Hindus and the Buddhists. When a Muslim experienced a spiritual rebirth through a sufi, it was called an awakening. When a non-Muslim was similarly transformed, it was called conversion.

India, whose social structure was fossilized by the caste system, was ready to accept a universal religion like Islam. In a predominantly

Hindu society, the position of a person was determined at birth. The Brahmans reserved for themselves the exclusive privilege to recite the mantras and propitiate the gods. The warrior Rajput class whose princely privileges were also guaranteed by birth backed the status quo. The vyasyas tilled the toil and paid the taxes. At the bottom of the social ladder were the shudras or the untouchables. To quote a well-known Indian writer V.T. Rajshekar: “These untouchables were denied the use of public wells and were condemned to drink any filthy water they could find. Their children were not admitted to schools attended by the caste Hindu children. Though they worshiped the gods of Hindus and observed the same festivals, the

Hindu temples were closed to them. Barbers and washer men refused to render them service. Caste Hindus, who fondly threw sugar to ants and reared dogs and other pets and welcomed persons of other religions to their houses, refused to give a drop of water to the untouchables or to show them one iota of sympathy. These untouchable Hindus were treated by the caste Hindus as sub-human, less than men, worse than beasts ...". In this social matrix, the message of Islam with its emphasis on the brotherhood of man and the transcendence of God found a ready reception.

But the most important reason for the success of the sufis lay in the spiritual bent of the Indian mind. Every culture produces an archetype that personifies the ethos of that culture. For instance, in contemporary America, it is the businessman who personifies the ethos of the American culture. During the industrial revolution in Europe it was the empiricist and the inventor. During the Dark Ages in Europe it was the monk. In medieval Japan it was the Samurai. In the Muslim Middle East it was the traditionalist. In India, it was the sadhu and the rishi. Gautama Buddha personified this archetype; so did Shankara Acharya and Tulsi Das. These men of faith enjoyed and continue to enjoy an honor and respect that is the envy of kings and emperors. As Islam entered the subcontinent, it adapted its mode to fit the spiritual paradigm. The sufi could intuitively and immediately relate to the Indian psyche in a manner that the learned doctors of law could not. Thus it was the great sufis who not only succeeded in introducing millions of Indians to Islam but also contributed to the evolution of a unique Hindustani language, culture, poetry and music which amalgamated the ancient inheritance of India with the vibrancy of Islam.

In the subcontinent, by far the most outstanding among the great sufi shaykhs was Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti of Ajmer. Indeed, he is generally accepted as the fountainhead of Islamic spiritual movements in India and Pakistan. The Khwaja was born in Sajistan in Central Asia in the year 1139. Orphaned at the young age of twelve, he traveled to Samarqand and received his early education in that great center of learning. He was a Hafize Qur'an at age fifteen and had mastered the Arabic, Farsi and Turkic languages. He then traveled to Neshapur where he became a disciple of Khwaja Uthman Chisti. After receiving his training in the methodology of the Chistiya Order for seven years, Khwaja Moeenuddin was inducted into that Order. From Neshapur, he traveled to Baghdad where he met the

towering personages of the age including Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani, Shaykh Ziauddin Suhrawardi, Khwaja Awhaduddin Kirmani and Khwaja Abu Saeed Tabrizi. In Isfahan, he met Khwaja Qutbuddin, who became his disciple and later his successor in Delhi. From Isfahan, Khwaja Moeenuddin traveled to Ghazna, Lahore and Multan where he mastered Sanskrit and Hindi so that he could communicate with the local people.

It was about this time that Muhammed Ghori defeated Prithvi Raj Chauhan at the Battle of Tarain (1192) and added Delhi and Ajmer to the Ghorid Sultanate. Khwaja Moeenuddin moved from Multan to Delhi and then to Ajmer, which had been the capital of the Chauhan dynasty. This town in the Rajasthan desert became the fountainhead of a sufi movement that touched every corner of India and Pakistan. Thousands embraced Islam through his efforts. Millions did so through the efforts of his disciples. Three of his disciples themselves became towering personages of renown and occupy an important place in the hierarchy of the great sufis. These were Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki (after whom the Qutub Minar of Delhi is named), Shaykh Hameeduddin Naguri and Baba Fareed Ganj of Lahore. Only once did the Khwaja of Ajmer return to Delhi. Sultan Shamsuddin Altumish was the Sultan of Delhi. When the Khwaja approached the capital, the

Sultan presented himself in person with enormous presents of gold, silver and jewels. The presents were politely declined. This pattern of solicitation on the part of the ruling monarchs and a rebuff by the great sufis was to be repeated countless times in Muslim history. The vision of the sufis was fixed on a far higher goal than the gold of the world. They scorned the world; so the world chased them. Theirs was the kingdom of heaven, eternal, transcendent, unscathed and untouched by the rise and fall of dynasties. It was this selflessness that made them the beloved of the masses, something the rulers wanted but could not attain.

Khwaja Moeenuddin was a poet of renown. Over 10,000 couplets in Farsi are ascribed to him. He was a prolific writer, but most of his writings have been lost. He died in 1236, adored, venerated and extolled. If there is one person to whom belongs the credit for introducing Islam to India and Pakistan and of building the largest Islamic community in the world today, it was Khwaja Moeenuddin Chisti of Ajmer.

The sufis were eminently successful not just because they recited the dhikr, chanted devotional songs and practiced charity, but because they established effective institutions to do their work in their own lifetime and to continue it after they departed. At the center of the sufi approach is the belief that only a learned and pious teacher can impart true knowledge to a discipline. The structure of a sufic order is pyramidal. At the apex of the pyramid is the Qutub (the pole) or the Wali (master, protector,), Khalifa (representative) or Sajjadah Nishin (one who resides in the sanctuary). For instance, the Qutub of the Qadariya School is Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani of Baghdad.

The methodology or approach of a sufic order is called the tareeqah. Initiation into a sufi order is voluntary. Upon initiation, a person becomes a murid. The word murid derives from the Arabic word iradah, meaning desire or will. A murid is one who desires and craves for proximity to God and is inclined towards Divine Love. The murid's progression in the ranks of the tareeqah takes him (her) through the following stages: Muftadi (student); Mutadarrij (practitioner); Shaykh (teacher) and finally the Qutub (the pillar or pole). The exact terms may vary between the tareeqas. Obedience to the teacher and an extraordinary degree of discipline is required of the murid. There is no conflict between the various sufi orders. A person may belong to several orders at the same time, although attachment to a single teacher is preferred.

The progress of a murid is measured in darajat (degrees) or maqamat (stages): tawbah (repentance), zuhd (avoidance of impure actions), faqr (humility, renunciation of worldly goods), sabr (patience), tawakkul (reliance on God alone for one's needs) and rada (earning Divine pleasure). Thus a sufi order establishes an organizational structure, provides a methodology for instruction, measures progress of the initiates and takes them step-by-step towards certain knowledge (ilm alyaqin).

The principal place where adherents of a sufi order meet is called a zawiyah. Secondary places of meeting for dhikr and study are referred to as halqah (circle). Zawiyahs and halqahs grew up throughout the Muslim world. The sufi orders and their organizations provided continuity through their silsilah (spiritual connectivity relating a sufi through his teachers to the Prophet). Ascension to the highest position in the organization was by appointment of the Qutub, who, as he approached the end of his life, would

nominate and confirm his heir. Syed Mohammed Ghouse of Sindh introduced the silsilah of Abdul Qader Jeelani into India and Pakistan in the 15th century (1482). Although the Qadariya silsilah had less of an impact on Indian soil than the Chishtiya order, the name of Abdul Qader Jeelani is revered throughout the subcontinent. He is commonly referred to as Peeran-e-pir Dastagir or Ghouse-ul-Azam Dastagir. One of the most famous shaykhs of the Qadariya silsilah was Miyan Pir who passed away in Lahore in 1635. Miyan Pir was a teacher to Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Moghul Emperor Shah Jehan. Dara Shikoh, a scholar of repute who was well versed in several languages, wrote a biography of Miyan Pir, who is widely credited with introducing Islam to the rural areas of Punjab and Kashmir.

From Ajmer the Chishtiya order spread to Delhi, Punjab, Bengal and the Deccan. Khwaja Moeenuddin Chisti trained and dispatched to the far-flung corners of the subcontinent men who stand out as spiritual giants in the region. These include Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki (Delhi, d. 1236), Baba Farid of Punjab (Pak Patan, d. 1265), Nizamuddin Awliya (Delhi, d. 1325) who was a disciple of Baba Farid, Hazrat Maqsum, another disciple of Baba Farid (Rourki, Bihar, d. 1291), Nasiruddin Muhammed, commonly referred to as Chirag-e-Dehli (a disciple of Nizamuddin Awliya, Delhi, d. 1356) and Hazrat Gaysu Daraz (a disciple of Chirag-e-Dehli, Gulbarga, d.1422). Together, these men transformed a continent, molded it in an Islamic crucible, lit the candle of faith in the hearts of millions and laid the spiritual foundation for one of the richest and most powerful dynasties the world has ever known, namely the great Moghuls of India.

The history of the Chishtiya order is so intricately woven into the politics of the Delhi court that no survey of Indian history is complete without an acknowledgment of the profound impact made by the Chishtiya order. The first Moghul emperor Babur was himself a sufi mystic. Emperor Akbar was a murid of Shaykh Salim Chishti (Fatehpur Sikri, d. 1572). He made annual pilgrimages on foot to the tomb of Shaykh Salim as well as to the tomb of Khwaja Moeenuddin of Ajmer. Emperors Jehangir, Shah Jehan and his son Dara Shikoh were ardent believers in these shaykhs. Since the methods and processes of the sufis have changed little over the last thousand years, the Chishtiya order, together with its sister Qadariya and Suhrwardi orders, provide a cultural link between modern Islam with the Middle Ages. Their history helps us understand the condition of the Muslims in the world today.

Khwaja Khutbuddin Bakhtiar Khaki was the designee of Khwaja Moeenuddin for the Delhi region. Born in Turkistan, he was educated in Baghdad where he met Khwaja Moeenuddin and became his murid. When Khwaja Moeenuddin migrated to Ajmer, Bakhtiar Khaki followed him and was sent to Delhi as the Chishtiya representative. Delhi was the seat of political power and a caldron of political intrigue. Sultan Altumish offered the post of the Kadi of Delhi to Shaykh Bakhtiar but the Shaykh declined, preferring the independence of the spiritual pursuit to the constraint of official power. The sultan was an avid supporter of tasawwuf. Sufi practices received official protection and common acceptance. Shaykh Bakhtiar himself was a well-known khawwal (reciter of mystic poetry) and often led qawwali gatherings (called samaa by the sufis). Thousands in the Delhi area accepted Islam through the radiance of this great mystic. Shaykh Bakhtiar passed away in 1236 and the mantle of the Chishtiya order passed on to Baba Fareed Ganj Shakr.

The emergence of tasawwuf as a powerful force in the Indian milieu did not go unchallenged by competing ideas. In the 14th century, the courts of Delhi witnessed a tug-of-war between the sufis, the reformers, the kadis, the philosophers and the ruling elite. The geopolitics of the times presents a colorful backdrop for the war of ideas in the Delhi courts.

By the middle of the 14th century, trade routes between Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, India and China, which had been cut by the Mongol invasions, had been restored. With the conversion of Ghazan the Great (1295), Persia was back in the fold of Islam. This removed the impediment to travel by land from India to west Asia and from there to Africa and Spain. A resilient Islam welded together a world order wherein people and ideas traveled freely from one continent to another.

There emerged three centers of political power in the Muslim world. The first was the rich Mali Kingdom in Africa, which attained its zenith under Mansa Musa (d. 1332). The second was the Mamluke Empire embracing Egypt and Syria. The third, and by far the most powerful, was the Sultanate of Delhi. (Yuan China was a global power but we will refer to it only in the context of diplomatic relations between Delhi and Beijing). The Khiljis (1296-1316) conquered all of India and Pakistan, from Peshawar to Malabar, an area covering more than a million and half square miles. The Tughlaqs (1316-1451), who followed the Khiljis, inherited this vast empire.

We shall focus on the court of Muhammed bin Tughlaq (d. 1351), primarily because we know a great deal about his court through the writings of Ibn Batuta. So rich was the Delhi Sultanate that Ibn Batuta, who was a kadi in Delhi from 1335-1341, records that whenever the Emperor passed through the streets of Delhi, the courtiers following him threw coins of gold and silver in the streets for the ammah (common folk) to pick up. It was in this magnificent Delhi court that the final resolution of the tug-of-war between the sufis, the anti-sufis, the philosophers, the doctors of law and the ruling elite took place. It is a fascinating story because the outcome of the events in the 14th century directly affected the course of further historical developments down to our own times.

The Mongol devastations resulted in a substantial migration of men of learning from Central Asia and Persia into India. The influx of the sufis provided the spiritual momentum for the spread of Islam in India and Pakistan. However, the migration was not confined to dervishes and sufis. A large number of ulema and kadis also fled and sought employment in Hindustan. Others migrated further east to the Indonesian islands.

The Delhi sultans, eager to show that they were defenders of the faith, made every effort to employ these scholars. They also sent out emissaries to the far-flung corners of the Islamic world to hire renowned kadis, ulema and philosophers for official service in the Indian empire. The simultaneous presence of the sufis who pursued the intuitive and spiritual approach to Islam and the kadis who sought strict adherence to the rules of Fiqh provided the first element of tension in the Delhi courts. The doctors of law sought to influence the empire in the direction of strict adherence to the Shariah. They found some sufi practices, such as samaa (a forerunner of modern day qawwali) objectionable and sought to influence the Delhi court to declare a ban on them.

A second element of tension was introduced by the reform movements of the era. In the 13th century, as it is today, there were reformers who saw in tasawwuf the possibility of social stagnation. One of the best-known reformers of the age was Ibn Taymiyah of Damascus (d. 1326). Ibn Taymiyah was one of the last of the scholars of the classical age of Islam and he saw in the other-worldliness of tasawwuf the seeds of social decadence. Through his writings and his speeches he sought to energize a defeated community, which was reeling from the Mongol onslaught. His

model was the activist model of the early Companions of the Prophet. As a young man, he aroused the Mamlukes to take a stand against the Mongols. Ibn Taymiyah's ideas traveled to Delhi where they were pitted against the powerful sufi movement of the Chishtiya Order.

A third element of tension was the presence of the Mu'tazilites (philosophers). The Mu'tazilites emerged in the eighth century as a result of the impact of Greek ideas on Islam. They won the patronage of the Abbasids and their dogma became the court dogma at the court of Harun al Rashid. Taking advantage of official patronage, the Mu'tazilites overextended themselves, applied the philosophical approach to the Qur'an, incurred the wrath of the conservative ulema and were finally dethroned from power towards the beginning of the 9th century. But philosophy was by no means dead among the Muslims. The Islamic world continued to produce a galaxy of philosopher-scientists right up to the time of the Mongol invasions. Among the more renowned were Al Khwarizmi (d. 863), Al Farabi (d. 950), Abu Ali Sina (d. 1037), Omar Khayyam (d. 1132) and Al Tusi (d. 1274). The great philosopher of the Maghrib, Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) wrote his commentaries on Aristotle in the 12th century. During the 13th and 14th centuries, some of the philosopher-scholars migrated to India and found a receptive environment in the Delhi courts. Amongst the more notable of the philosophers in Delhi was Shaykh Ilmuddin. The philosophers, too, were pitted against the popular sufi movement of the Chishtiya Order.

It was under the Tughlaq emperors that the sufi movement ran headlong into the combined opposition of the ulema, the philosophers and the monarchs. The kadis and the ulema sought a ban on sama'a, declaring it to be against the injunctions of the Shariah. To sort out these controversies, Gayasuddin Tughlaq, Sultan of Delhi, convened a conference of the leading ulema, kadis and philosophers in Delhi at his court in 1320. Nizamuddin Awliya was also invited. What started as a conference turned into a court martial of the Chishtiya sufis. Kadi Jalaluddin, chief kadi of Delhi and Shaykh Zadajam argued against sama'a. Nizamuddin Awliya defended the practice, basing his arguments on certain Hadith. The opposition argued that the supporting Hadith were weak. The discussion became heated, so the Sultan turned to Shaykh Ilmuddin, who was a philosopher (Mu'tazilite) and had traveled extensively through Persia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Shaykh

Ilmuddin answered that sama a was halal for those who listened to it with their hearts and was haram for those who heard it with their nafs. Nonetheless, he too sided with Kadi Jalaluddin and asked the Emperor to forbid sama a. The Emperor deliberated and, not to be drawn into a religious controversy, gave a split decision permitting sama a gatherings for the Chishtiya Order but forbidding it to the followers of the Qalandariya and Haidari Orders. (The Qalandariya and Haidari orders had not yet made major inroads into India at that time so the Emperor had nothing to lose in taking a position against the practices of these two orders.)

Gayasuddin Tughlaq died in 1325. The tug-of-war between the sufis, the kadis and the philosophers, continued in the court of Muhammed bin Tughlaq (d. 1351). One of the most capable monarchs of the age, Muhammed bin Tughlaq is an enigma to students of history. He was a scholar, a hafz-e-Qur'an, well versed in Fiqh and was punctual in his prayers, fasting and zakat. Like the first four caliphs, he treated the non-Muslims with dignity and ensured that taxation was fair to all of his subjects. Yet, he was impetuous, intolerant of dissent and punished, with a vengeance, those who stood in his way. He was the first monarch who realized that ruling the vast subcontinent from far-away Delhi was hopeless and sought to establish his capital near the center of gravity of Hindustan, namely at Daulatabad, located about a hundred miles inland from the modern city of Bombay. When the entrenched bureaucrats, comfortable in their luxurious villas in the capital, dragged their feet, he forced them to move. Then, as fate would have it, the monsoons failed for five consecutive years and India was hit with a terrible famine. Daulatabad was without water. Tughlaq had the entire court trek back to Delhi, causing untold misery for everyone.

It was during the Tughlaq period and the preceding Khilji period that Islam was introduced into the Deccan and the Dakhni language, the parent of modern Urdu, was born. Borrowing an idea from Kublai Khan of China (d. 1294), Tughlaq introduced leather currency. This was a far-sighted move designed to further trade, which was constrained by the availability of gold and silver. But the wily Indians, Muslims and Hindus alike, frustrated this move by creating counterfeit currency.

Tughlaq had to withdraw the currency at an enormous cost to the treasury. However, it is his interactions with the ulema, kadis, philosophers

and sufis of the age that concern us here because these interactions determined the shape of Islam for centuries to come.

Returning to the powerful Chishtiya movement, Shaykh Baba Fareed Ganj succeeded Khwaja Qutbuddin in 1235. His forefathers had migrated from Kabul during the Mongol devastations. As directed by Moeenuddin Chishti of Ajmer, Baba Fareed migrated to western Punjab. If there was one person who may be given credit for the introduction of Islam into Punjab (and hence into today's Pakistan), it was Baba Fareed. Impressed with his piety, sincerity and dedication, thousands, including some of the powerful Rajput clans, accepted Islam. Baba Fareed was a doctor of Fiqh and was a noted poet in Arabic and Farsi. Both the Sabiriya and Nizamiya branches of the Chishti Order within the subcontinent originated from him. He trained and sent teachers to the far corners of India and Pakistan. Notable among them were Shaykh Jamal of Hanswi, Imamul Haq of Sialkot, Mawzum Alauddin Sabir of Sahranpur, Shaykh Muntaqaddin of Deccan and most importantly, Nizamuddin Awliya of Delhi. Baba Fareed was the author of *Israr ul Awliya*, which contains encyclopedic information about sufi thought and practices.

The mantle of leadership of the Chishtiya Order passed on to Nizamuddin Awliya in 1257. No other sufi master achieved the acceptance of the Indian masses and the Sultans of Delhi, as did Nizamuddin Awliya. Indeed, his was the zenith of the sufi movement in Hindustan. He was a scholar of Hadith, a fountain of spirituality, a powerful debater and a dedicated teacher. It is related that at any given time, over 3,000 students and two hundred qawwals attended his zawiyah at the outskirts of Delhi. Chief among his students were Shaykh Hisamuddin of Multan, Shaykh Burhanuddin Gareeb of Deccan, Shaykh Yaqub Patni of Gujrat, Sirajuddin Uthmani and Bu Ali Qalandar of Panipat. The great poet Emir Khusro was a murid of Nizamuddin Awliya.

The relationship between the Chishtiya Order and the Delhi Sultanate had been cordial until that time. The Sultans, aware of the hold that the sufis had over the masses, sought to cultivate the blessings of the sufi masters. The advent of the Khilji dynasty (1296-1316) saw the armies of the Delhi Sultans conquer the entire subcontinent, all the way to the southern tip of the peninsula. The architect of these conquests, the mighty Alauddin Khilji, was of a secular bent. But he was aware of the power of the sufis and sought

cordial relations with them. It was Alauddin who sent word to Nizamuddin Awliya expressing his desire to meet the Master. The message elicited the famous riposte from the Shaykh: “ My hut has two doors. If the Emperor enters it through one door, I go out the other”. After Alauddin, there was a brief period of turbulence in Delhi, followed by the establishment of the Tughlaq dynasty (1316-1351).

Nizamuddin Awliya passed away in 1325 and designated Maqsum Nasiruddin Mahmud (commonly known as Chirag-e-Dehli, the light of Delhi) as his successor. It was the same year that Muhammed bin Tughlaq ascended the throne of Hindustan. To break the hold of the sufis and to keep them busy with superfluous work, Muhammed bin Tughlaq forced them into his service. Chirag-e-Dehli was asked to assist the king with royal robes, a ceremony that signified obedience and submission to the crown. When the Master refused, he was thrown into jail. Others were forced out of the capital. For instance, Shaykh Shamsuddin Yahya was forced to retire to Kashmir. Shaykh Shahabuddin was told to serve the king. When the learned Shaykh refused, his beard was pulled out, a fatwa was passed against him by Kadi Kamaluddin of Delhi and he was finally killed. Delhi was depleted of the sufi Masters, except for those who could not leave because of age or official constraint.

Muhammed bin Tughlaq had spent his youth in the company of philosophers and he was a Mu'tazilite by training. He was particularly influenced by Shaykh Ilmuddin, the renowned philosopher of the times, who lived in Delhi. Shaykh Ilmuddin had traveled through Syria and had met Ibn Taymiyah of Damascus (d. 1326) and had absorbed his reformist and counter-sufi thoughts. Tughlaq, in his Mu'tazilite thinking, was similar to Harun al Rashid, but he lacked the sagacity and statesmanship of Harun. Just as the successors of Harun punished those who opposed the Mu'tazilite doctrines, so did Muhammed bin Tughlaq.

It is an irony of Islamic history that those who should have been the most liberal in their tolerance of dissident thought, namely the philosophers, turned out to be the most intolerant. Twice they had the opportunity to influence history—once during the early years of the Abbasids (circa 800) and the second time during the powerful Tughlaq dynasty of India (circa 1330). Both times they failed miserably and embarked on a tyrannical suppression of those who disagreed with them. Islamic history, in turn,

rejected them. Their role was relegated to the periphery of the Islamic body politic, to the detriment of both philosophy and the Muslim ummah. Muhammed bin Tughlaq died in 1335, classified a maverick sultan by history.

The sufis survived and prospered because theirs was the kingdom of God, untouched by the vagaries of time. They sang of the love of God and people resonated to their tune. They gave of themselves for the love of mankind and fought for what was right, often laying down their lives in the struggle. The ulema and kadis were defeated, because they were employees of the kings and could be fired from their jobs at will. Despite their independence, they were construed to be an arm of the ruling classes. The philosophers lost because of their tyrannical approach. They were bogged down in endless argumentation and they over-extended their approach to the Qur'an, a subject that was clearly beyond the scope of their methodology. The Islam that survived was a sufic Islam, inward-looking, spiritual, amalgamating within its folds the cultures of the lands where it flourished. It was different in color and character from classical Islam (up to the destruction of Baghdad in 1258), which was empirical, vibrant, extrovert. It was this sufic Islam that was destined to shape the history of Muslim peoples after the 13th century.

The Rehla of Ibn Batuta

Ibn Batuta embodies the universal spirit of humankind to explore, learn, document and teach. Born in 1304 in the Moroccan city of Tangier, he set out to perform his Hajj as a young man of twenty-one. From Mecca, he embarked on a journey that took him, over a span of 25 years, to all the major centers of world culture. Undoubtedly, one of the greatest travelers the world has known, Ibn Batuta belongs to a select group of explorers like Fah-yen (China, 6th century), Ibn Jubayr (Spain, 12th century) and Marco Polo (Venice, 13th century).

The historical importance of Ibn Batuta lies in his Rehla (travelogue), which provides a snapshot of the Islamic world, as it existed in the first half of the 14th century and its relationships with the other centers of global and regional power. Ibn Batuta personally met some of the major figures who have left their imprint on history, including Ibn Khaldun of the Maghrib, Ibn Taymiyah of Syria, Sultan Abu Saeed of Persia-Iraq, Sultan Nuruddin Ali of East Africa, Sultan Orkhan of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Muhammed bin Tughlaq of India, Sultan Al Zahir of Indonesia, Emperor Toghun Timur of China, Mansa Sulaiman of Mali and some of the most prominent sufi shaykhs of the era. His impressions of these men provide invaluable information about the movers and shakers of the era. His observations on the customs, values and institutions of the societies he visited provide a first-hand account of the unity as well as the cultural diversity in the Muslim world as it existed at that time.

In the first half of the 14th century, the world was in relative peace. The Crusades had ended and the Mongol slaughters were a thing of the past. In the Maghrib, there existed a balance of power between the Muslims and the Christians. The Al Muhaddith dynasty in the Maghrib had broken up and its place taken by four separate powers, the Merinides of Morocco, Wadids of Algeria, Hafsids of Tunisia and the Nasirids of Granada. There was relative quiet between these sultanates and the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. This equilibrium allowed the Straits of Gibraltar to be open to shipping and Venetian and Genoese vessels were able to cross the Straits

and trade with the western shores of France and England. The prosperous city-states of Italy experienced the first wave of the Renaissance. Egypt, Syria and Hejaz were under the Mamlukes of Egypt who had earned the respect of the Islamic world by their victory over the Mongols. Moreover, after the destruction of Baghdad, Cairo had become the seat of the Caliphate. Cairo and Damascus became world-class cities due to their trade with India and China through Yemen. Persia was back in the fold of Islam and there began tremendous reconstruction works in Persia, Iraq and Khorasan. The Silk Road to China was reopened. The Ottoman Turks were continuing their relentless advance into Europe, while the Byzantine emperors tried to contain them through treaties and marriage ties. In India and Pakistan, the rich and powerful Tughlaq dynasty ruled, heir to the mighty Khiljis who had left a consolidated subcontinent under the military-political control of Delhi. Islam had entered Malaysia and Indonesia and the Sultanate of Aceh eagerly sought scholars and jurists who were fleeing the Mongol devastations of the previous century. China was still ruled by the Mongol (Yuan) dynasty, which had brought the northern and southern halves of China under one flag. West Africa witnessed the great Mali Empire at its zenith.

The cement that held this far-flung Islamic world together was the Shariah. Ibn Batuta was trained in the Shariah and its application in the Maliki School of Fiqh. As such, he carried the credentials of a kadi that was to serve him well in a world that was at relative peace with itself under the umbrella of a Sunni vision of Islam. Second only to the Law, as a universal binding force was the Arabic language. Even in the eastern parts of the Islamic world wherein Farsi was the literary language, Arabic enjoyed a unique place as the language of the Qur'an and Hadith and as the medium of transmission of the Law. The Law and the language were the universal forces that held the Muslims together, even as they fought amongst themselves and with non-Muslims for power and position. Political power and the mastery of the great land mass extending from Mauritania to Bengal gave them control of the trade routes linking the principal seats of civilization, namely China, India, Persia, Egypt, Italy and West Africa. This vast network of trade routes was jealously guarded and protected by the regional monarchs who knew that their own prosperity depended on international trade. A traveler could move from Mali to Delhi without leaving the familiar religious and linguistic framework of the Muslims.

Trade as well as the competition among the rulers for prestige facilitated the movement of scholars, architects, doctors, engineers, poets and men of learning who sought gainful employment at the various courts. This movement provided a powerful engine for the spread of knowledge and the diffusion of faith. The beneficiaries were the peripheral territories that had recently come under the political sway of Islam. These territories included India and Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey and West Africa. It was during this period that the technology of gunpowder moved from China to India, west Asia, Egypt and from there to Europe. The 14th century transformed the Islamic landscape and shifted the center of gravity of Islam from its traditional Arab-Persian heartland to the regions that hold the largest number of believers today: Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nigeria.

The importance of the external links provided by the Divine Law, the Arabic language and trade routes is obvious. Of equal importance was the spiritual unity of Islam, which had asserted itself at the height of the Mongol catastrophe and now was the principal vehicle for religious expression. Like a vast subterranean lake of fresh water linking small islands, this spirituality linked the lands inhabited by the Africans, the Arabs, the Persians, the Turks, the Indians and the Malays. Transcending geography and culture, it provided the motive force for the migration of great sufi shaykhs into the heartland of Hindustan and the dispersed islands of the East Indies. It was also the engine that propelled the Turkish advance into southeastern Europe, as one sufi order or the other influenced the ghazi brigades of the Turks.

The Chishtiya order had penetrated the jungles of central India and Mallams (religious teachers) traversed the African grasslands carrying with them not just water bags to quench bodily thirst but the universal spirituality of Islam to quench the spiritual thirst of all human beings. By the first half of the 14th century, this spirituality had moved forward from mere contemplation and recitation to social activism and had established powerful institutions to sustain this activism. A traveler could find peace and solace at various stations not only in the karavanserais (places of rest for travelers) built by the rulers, but also in the qanqas (places of retreat) built by the sufis. Among the better known of the sufis whose hospitality Ibn Batuta enjoyed were Shaykh Burhanuddin of Alexandria, Shaykh Abdur

Rahman ibn Mustafa of Jerusalem, Shaykh Qutbuddin of Isfahan, Chirag-e-Dehli of India and Shah Jalal of Sylhet.

Ibn Batuta received his early education in the Maliki School of Fiqh, a vocation that was to serve him well in his interactions with the learned men in far-away lands. He was also trained in the urbane manners becoming of a gentleman of the era. Tasawwuf pervaded the Islamic social milieu and Ibn Batuta was at home with the sufi masters. Indeed, Ibn Batuta personified the new Muslim personality, imbibed with sufi spirituality, which was fully integrated with the rules and regulations of the Shariah. Ibn Batuta, as a native of Morocco, was fluent in the language. Familiarity with Arabic ensured that he would find companionship with the kadis, ulema and the sufis who formed the literary and spiritual elite of Islam.

In 1325, he set out from Tangier to fulfill his obligation for Hajj. At that time, performance of the Hajj was not just a visit to Mecca but an adventure through the many cities that lay in the pilgrim's path and an opportunity to visit great mosques, madrasas and to learn from master teachers. It was also a unique opportunity to give expression to the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. Ibn Batuta's caravan, which included the noted scholar Abu Abdullah al Zubaidi and Abu Abdullah al Nafzawi, Kadi of Tunis, passed through some of the principal cities of the Maghrib including Tlemchen (capital of the Wadids), Algiers and Tunis. Tunis was at the time a major trade depot and a cultural center. From Africa came gold, ivory and nuts. From Egypt it imported embroidery and woodwork as well as trans-shipped products of the east such as Indian herbs, medicines, spices and Chinese porcelain. These products were sold to the city-states of southern Europe as well as to the other cities of the Maghrib. It was the eastern capital of the Al Muhaddith who embellished it with mosques and built higher schools of learning. With the breakup of the Al Muhaddith Empire, Christian armies had overrun much of Spain and had expelled most of the Muslims. North Africa, Tunis in particular, benefited from this forced migration of scholars, artisans, poets, musicians, horticulturalists and men of letters. The Hafsids, who succeeded the Al Muhaddith, continued the tradition of encouraging learning and Tunis with a population of over 100,000, became a center that attracted noted ulema from as far away as Cairo, Damascus and Fez. Ibn Batuta stayed in Tunis for about two months

acquiring in the process some of the Andalusian refinement and court manners that would serve him well later in his travels.

From Tunis, the caravan traversed the harsh Libyan Desert until it arrived at the city of Alexandria. This city, located at the mouth of the Nile Delta, was a busy commercial center with a brisk trade with Venice, Genoa, Tunis, Tangier, Valencia, Sicily and the Syrian coast. It was here that the caravan routes leading from India and the sea routes from East Africa met. All the products of Asia and Africa passed through the city. In Alexandria, Ibn Batuta met the noted sufi Shaykh Burhanuddin and spent some time in his zawiyah. The elderly Shaykh gave the young traveler robes to signify his initiation into the sufi order and showered upon him his spiritual radiance. From Alexandria, the Hajj caravan reached the great city of Cairo.

Cairo at that time had a population in excess of half a million, which was more than fifteen times that of the city of London, three times that of the city of Tabriz, twice that of the city of Delhi. It was the capital of the Mamlukes. The Mamlukes, like their counterparts in India, originated from European and Central Asian slaves who were bought and adopted by the Turks, accepted Islam, married into noble families and through their sheer resilience rose up to become kings. The Mamlukes of Egypt were called Bahri Mamlukes because some of them inhabited the islands in the River Nile. They displaced the ailing Ayyubid dynasty in 1250 and brought Egypt, Syria and the Red Sea coasts of Arabia and the Sudan under their control. The Mamlukes proved themselves to be excellent administrators and outstanding patrons of learning. Ibn Batuta arrived in Cairo during the reign of Sultan Al Nasir Muhammed ibn Qalawun who ruled from 1293 to 1341. A great builder, Al Nasir built more than thirty mosques and numerous schools and hospitals. The great mosque of ibn Qalawun still stands in the old city of Cairo. The Mongol plunders in Persia, Iraq and Central Asia had pushed a large number of scholars, sufis, poets, linguists, architects, fuqahah, mathematicians, philosophers and doctors into Cairo.

Cairo had become the pre-eminent center of culture, art and learning in the Islamic world. After the destruction of Baghdad (1258), a surviving member of the Abbasids had been installed as the Caliph in Cairo and the city had become the seat of the Caliphate and hence the focus of Islamic political life. The hospital (maristan as it was called) of Qalawun was a marvel of the age. It contained more than 300 wards for patients and was

equipped with the most advanced surgical tools of the era. The hospital was well staffed with doctors, surgeons and attendants. There were lecture rooms, baths, libraries and dispensaries attached to the building. Recitations from the Qur'an soothed the soul. Music was played to help the healing process. Treatment was free. Rich and poor were treated alike.

Madrasas (schools) were attached to the mosques. The concept of a mosque-madrasa grew out of Masjid al Nabawi, the mosque of the Prophet, in Madina. The idea found patronage at the highest level during the intense rivalry between the Fatimids and the Abbasids (969-1000). Both Cairo and Baghdad became great centers of learning. Al Azhar grew in Cairo and the Nizamiya College flourished in Baghdad. The example of these two capital cities was copied by the provincial centers of Merv, Nishapur, Bukhara, Samarqand, Damascus, Fez,

Timbuktu and Cordoba, as well as the cities that came under Islamic influence in later centuries such as Delhi, Tabriz, Istanbul and Lahore. Ibn Batuta records that the schools in Cairo were too numerous to count. Each mosque-madrasa had a courtyard wherein great teachers gave lectures and eager students learned the Qur'an, Fiqh, Arabic grammar, mathematics, medicine and philosophy, although the study of more secular sciences such as mathematics, medicine and philosophy was not available in all schools.

The hajj caravan with which Ibn Batuta was traveling was delayed. Impatient to reach the Hejaz, Ibn Batuta, took the southern route down the River Nile and through the desert to the Sudanese port of Aydhab. He described the Nile valley as a veritable garden, full of life and vitality, serving as the breadbasket for the Mamluke Empire. Aydhab was a sultry harbor town, dusty, hot, without water, crammed with import-export merchandise. Forced by inhospitable weather, Ibn Batuta turned back to Cairo and from there he traveled through the Sinai to Palestine and Syria. He prayed at the mosque of Abraham in al Khalil (Hebron) and spent several days at Masjid al Aqsa in Jerusalem. By 1326, Jerusalem had ceased to be a bone of contention between the Christians and the Muslims. The Crusades in Palestine had ended and the chief attraction of the city was its pilgrimage sites for Muslims, Christians and Jews. Ibn Batuta spent several nights in prayer at Masjid al Aqsa and at the Dome of the Rock, recalling the events of Isra and Meraj. He also spent many days at the zawiyah of Sufi Shaykh Abdul Rahman ibn Mustafa who belonged to the Rifai order.

After receiving his *ijazat* (literally meaning permission, also a diploma) from Shaykh ibn Mustafa, Ibn Batuta moved on to Damascus, where he met the well-known reformer Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328). The two were on different wavelengths. Ibn Batuta was a man of the new sufi age. Indeed, wherever he went, he sought the company of well-known sufis. By contrast, Ibn Taymiyah foresaw inherent dangers in the sufi approach, which had no empirical proofs and lent itself to exploitation by pretenders. The sufis would respond to this charge by asserting that the noticeable transformation of human character that the sufi approach brings about, was the best empirical proof of their approach. Ibn Taymiyah was very much against the allegorical interpretations given to the Qur'an by certain sufi schools and felt that the Qur'an had to be understood in its literal sense, as emphasized by Imam Shafi'i. Ibn Taymiyah fought a life-long struggle to alert his generation against the risks that he felt lurked in the sufi approach. He urged Muslims to return to what he felt was the vibrant, outward, empirical Islam of the Umayyad and the Abbasid periods. Needless to say, the two men did not see eye to eye. Indeed, Ibn Batuta felt that Ibn Taymiyah was a man who was slightly off-key. As history would have it, the Islamic world embraced the sufis and relegated Ibn Taymiyah to scholars respected but forgotten. It is only in the last 200 years, since the advent of European colonialism, that the Islamic world has once again turned to the ideas of Ibn Taymiyah to find some answers to the challenge of the West.

Damascus was the second capital of the Mamlukes and was a great city in its own right. During the struggle between the Mamlukes and the Il Khans of Persia-Iraq (1258-1315), Damascus had suffered. With the onset of peace between the two dynasties in 1315, the city had regained its former preeminence as a pivotal station in the trade routes linking Egypt and North Africa to the Black Sea, Persia, China and India. It had a population of over 250,000 and was known for its high quality steel, called Damascus steel, which was valued and sought after the world over.

The trade in iron and its processing provides one illustration of how Islam had welded together the old world into a single trading block. Iron ore was exported from East Africa to Gujrat in India where it was smelted into pig iron and re-exported to Syria. In Damascus, it was re-smelted, alloyed and formed into steel, using a process that was only re-discovered in the 1960s and is referred to as super-plasticity. Ibn Batuta records that the

bazaars of Damascus were thriving with imported goods which included spices, gems, embroidery, perfumes and medicinal herbs from India, porcelain from China, furs from the Black Sea area and Turkish horses from Central Asia. The nobility in Damascus, emulating the example of the Sultan in Cairo, had built numerous mosques, schools, hospitals, rest houses for travelers, canals and public baths. He spent a great deal of time at the magnificent Umayyad mosque of Damascus, learning among other subjects, the Hadith according to Shaykh Bukhari.

In September 1326, Ibn Batuta finally set out to perform his Hajj. Modern conveniences that Hajjis take for granted these days did not exist and the 800 miles from Damascus to Mecca were a trial for the hardy. Pilgrims usually traveled in large caravans, some as large as 30,000, with full provisions for the journey, led by an emir (leader), accompanied by imams, judges, doctors and protected by soldiers. Even so, many perished on the road, caught in the unpredictable desert sand storms, or attacked by bandits. It took almost a year to perform the Hajj and from some parts of Africa, such as Mali, it took almost two years. Yet they came, the sons and daughters of Adam, from all corners of the earth, to the hallowed sanctuary of Mecca, to celebrate the Name of the Creator and to cement the pristine brotherhood of humankind.

The rites of Hajj have not changed in the fourteen hundred years since the Prophet perfected them. A pilgrim today would experience the same emotions and express himself the same way, as did Ibn Batuta in the year 1326. Approaching from the north, the caravan from Damascus first stopped in Madina, the City of the Prophet. There, surrounded by the radiance of the Prophet's Mosque, Ibn Batuta prayed, remembering often the name of the beloved Apostle of God. At Dhul Halifa, he discarded his urbane attire, donned the Ihram and marched forth with his companions reciting Talbiya: "Here I am, O Lord, Here I am! Indeed, Thee alone is worthy of all Praise. Thine is the Bounty. Thine is the Sovereignty. Here I am at your Command, O Lord!". Emotions swelled in him as he first saw the Haram (the word Haram is used only for the sanctuaries around the Ka'ba in Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque in Madina and the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem), circled by thousands, invoking the name of God in a hundred different tongues. He melted into the human mass, completing the circles.

Thereafter, he marched forth to the hills of Safa and Marwa, recalling the struggle of Hajira to find water in the desert, after Prophet Ibrahim left her there with her infant son Ismail. He remembered that moment when Divine mercy intervened to answer the supplication of a mother and caused water to gush forth from a rock. The mother, Hajira, cried out, “Zumi, Ya Mubaraka (Stop! O, blessed water!). After traversing the hills of Safa and Marwa seven times, Ibn Batuta drank to his heart’s content from the well of Zamzam. (The word Zamzam derives from Zumi, the exclamation of Hajira when she saw water burst forth from a rock).

From Mecca, he proceeded to Mina and on to the great gathering at Arafat. On this plain stood the children of Adam, black and white, rich and poor, Arabs and Turks, Persians and Spaniards. Where in this gathering were the kings and where the mendicants? All were equal in the sight of God and equal in the sight of man, in supplication before the Creator, celebrating only His Name, invoking His mercy and His munificence. From Arafat, Ibn Batuta returned to Muzdalifa and on to Mina and Mecca to complete the rites of the Hajj and joined his fellow Hajjis in celebration of this blessed opportunity. He had now fulfilled the goal he had set for himself when he set out from Tangier, but farther horizons beckoned him.

In 1326, Ibn Batuta joined a caravan of Persian pilgrims returning home from Hajj. The caravan took the northerly route from Mecca to Madina, through central Arabia to Kufa. Along the route, Ibn Batuta saw the many wells, aqueducts and rest stops that had been built by Empress Zubaida, wife of Harun al Rashid, during her celebrated Hajj (799). Najaf and Karbala were pilgrimage sites. From Najaf, the young traveler turned south in the direction of Basra, visiting along the road the tomb of Shaykh Ahmed ibn Rifai, founder of the Rifai sufi order. He stayed at the zawiyah, participating in the sufi rites of the order, including prayer, music and rapturous movements of the dervishes. Farther south, in the city of Abidjan, Ibn Batuta spent more time in the company of sufis. Ascending the Persian plateau, he crossed the Zeros mountains to the beautiful city of Isfahan. Isfahan had escaped the Mongol devastations, partly because it was far from the main route of the advancing Mongol armies and partly because it had avoided taking a defiant stand and had accepted a measure of Mongol over-lordship. Ibn Batuta stayed with Shaykh Qutbuddin Hussain of the

Suhrawardi order. He then proceeded to the magnificent city of Shiraz, which, like its sister city of Isfahan, had escaped the Mongol devastations and had become the hub of sufi activity in Persia. Shiraz was referred to as “Burj e Awliya” (bridge to the Beloveds of God, the great sufis) and it was here that the well-known Farsi poet Shaykh Sa’adi and the venerated sufi Shaykh Ibn Khafif were buried. Ibn Batuta found the Persian people to be generous, given to culture and good deeds and the cultivation of piety.

Turning around, Ibn Batuta visited Baghdad but found the city struggling to lift itself out of its ruins. Persia was at this time ruled by the Mongol prince, Abu Said (1316-1335), an accomplished scholar, a pious man, a master builder and an able administrator. Under him Persia had prospered and had started to dig itself out of the ashes of the Mongol onslaught. The Mongols had made Tabriz their capital. Ibn Batuta visited this city and found it to be a prosperous commercial town comparable to Damascus, embellished with gardens, mosques and palaces.

Returning back to Baghdad, the world traveler took an excursion north towards Mosul where he visited a great sufi, a lady named Sitt Zahida, who was the patron saint and teacher for a great many sufis. In early Islamic history, tasawwuf was not a privilege only of men. A great many women stand out as towers of light, beckoning all men and women to that spirituality that is innate in humankind. Rabia al Adawiyyah (d. 802) was one of the earliest women sufis in Islam who expressed the love of God in exquisite and sublime Arabic poetry and was a teacher to many a great shaykh. It was much later in Islamic history that Muslim women were pushed into the background and were largely denied the privilege of learning and teaching.

After returning to Mecca and studying there for two years (1327-1329), Ibn Batuta embarked on a journey that took him to the coastal cities along the western shores of the Indian Ocean. Since the time of the Prophet, Muslims had sought their economic well-being in trade. The location of West Asia astride the major trade routes between Asia, Europe and Africa provided them a strategic geographical position. The East African coast was connected by sea to India, Indonesia and

China. Towns such as Abadan and Muscat on the Persian Gulf, Zafar on the southern shores of the Arabian Peninsula and Aden in Yemen were principal seaports. Included in this trade network were Mogadishu,

Mombasa, Kilwa and Shofala along the African coast. These became thriving cities ruled by local Muslim emirs.

The land further south was called the land of Zanj. The movement of people and goods was two-way. As early as the 8th century, there was a Zanj colony in southern Iraq. Ibn Batuta's itinerary took him from Mecca to Suakin (Sudan), Aden (Yemen), Zeila (Eritrea), Mogadishu (Somalia), Mombasa (Kenya) and further south to Zanzibar and Kilwa. East Africa exported gold, ivory, animal hide and hardwood. In turn it imported spices, fine cotton fabrics and medicines from India, porcelain and silk from China, steel from Damascus, brocades and brass-work from Cairo. The African seacoast was integrated through sufi missions with the rest of the Muslim world. Scholars as well as merchants from as far away as Samarqand immigrated, intermarried with African women and created the rich, composite culture of the Sahel. Ibn Batuta found the inhabitants of these cities quite affluent. They wore fine cotton clothes and fine gold jewelry, prayed in domed mosques, dined on fine porcelain from China. Their cities were peaceful, with no outer fortresses, offering a warm and open welcome to the merchants from far-away lands. This peaceful, no-walled character of the African coastal cities was to prove their undoing in the 16th century, when Portuguese ships appeared offshore and mercilessly bombarded the towns into submission one after the other.

The year 1332 saw Ibn Batuta explore the Anatolian plateau and the lands around the Black Sea. Three of his observations about Anatolia are noteworthy. First, the spirit of ghazzah was widespread among the Turks. By 1332, the Turks had conquered most of Anatolia and the budding Ottoman principality was soon to blossom into a world empire. Ever since the 9th century, Turkish tribes had burst forth from their homeland on the outskirts of Mongolia, first into Khorasan, then into Persia and onwards into Anatolia and beyond. These migrations were later sanctified in the form of a valiant struggle (ghazzah) for faith.

Islam provided an over-arching faith for the Turkish tribes whose intercontinental movements would have been inevitable with or without their mass conversion to Islam. Secondly, Ibn Batuta noted the participation of women in public life. Turkish women rode horses, went to war, attended state functions and engaged in trade on an equal footing with men, a situation not known in the strict atmosphere of the Maliki Maghrib from

which Ibn Batuta came. It was no surprise that the only women sovereigns, the queen-monarchs of Islam came from the Turks. (In the 16th century, there was a succession of five Muslim queens in Indonesia). Third, Ibn Batuta records the strong presence of youth movements in Anatolia, attached to sufi brotherhoods. The akhi youth movement reinforced fraternal bonds and taught young men the virtues of integrity, generosity, courage and nobility. Akhi fraternities provided hospitality to scholars and wayfarers. The akhi movement was to the youth what the ghazi movement was to the general population.

Ibn Batuta's vision now turned east towards Delhi, which had become a magnet for sufis, scholars and merchants. Setting out in late 1332, he traveled through the Volga region, which was even in his time noted for its brisk trade in slaves. Then through Khorasan and the Khanate of Chagatai, Ibn Batuta saw the ruins of Bukhara, Samarqand, Balkh and Herat. These were cities that were once the crown jewels of Islamic civilization but were laid waste by the Mongols. Ibn Batuta visited Kabul, Ghazna and Multan where he stayed with Shaykh Ruknuddin Abul Fatha of the Suhrawardi order. Arriving in Delhi in 1334, he was pressed into service as the chief kadi by the Emperor Muhammed bin Tughlaq, a monarch noted for his intellectual and literary attainment as well as for his impulsiveness. During the previous century Delhi had grown from a small Rajput garrison town into a bustling world-class cosmopolitan city and the seat of a mighty empire. The consolidation of the subcontinent under the central power of Delhi had brought unparalleled power and prosperity to India. Embassies from all of the Asian powers frequented the capital. The Qutub Minar was already a hundred years old and the great mosque of Quwwatul-Islam served as the Jamia Masjid for the metropolis.

Indeed, it was Ibn Batuta's description of the wealth and magnificence of the Delhi court that made him suspect in the eyes of his contemporaries when he returned home to Morocco. No less a person than Ibn Khaldun thought that the stories of Ibn Batuta ("the Shaykh from Tangier") were not credible. Ibn Batuta records that in 1340, an embassy arrived from the Emperor Toghon Timur, Yuan Emperor of China, seeking the Sultan's permission to establish a Buddhist monastery near Delhi. Muhammed bin Tughlaq denied the request. In historical hindsight, the denial prevented a more vigorous interaction between the Muslim sufis of India and the

Buddhists of the Yuan Empire and the spread of Islam into the Chinese mainland. So as not to send the Chinese ambassadors empty handed, the Sultan entrusted Ibn Batuta to accompany them to Beijing, along with gifts of gold, diamonds and pearls. During 1340, Ibn Batuta visited Gwalior, Gujrat and Daulatabad on his way to Surat in western India from where he was to have embarked on his voyage to China. But his ships capsized in a great storm off the coast of Malabar and Ibn Batuta found himself moving from city to city along the coast. Further travels took him to the Maldive Islands, Sri Lanka and Bengal where he visited with sufi Shaykh Jalal of Sylhet. Traveling eastward to Indonesia, he was received by Sultan Ahmed al Malik al Zahir of Sumatra. Finally, he did make his way to Beijing via Canton where he found a thriving community of Muslim traders.

Returning home to Morocco in 1349, the restless Ibn Batuta found himself on a journey to the south, to the great empire of Mali. During the years 1351-1355, his travels took him through the trade centers of Sijilmasa, Walata, Timbuktu and Gao on the Niger River. At this time Mansa Sulaiman, successor to the great Mansa Musa, ruled Mali.

Ibn Batuta's account of Muslim life in Mali is noteworthy for the differences in the way women were treated in African and Arab societies. In Mali, Ibn Batuta found that women were not secluded from men as they were in North Africa. Like their sisters in Turkish Anatolia, the Muslim African women frequented the markets, participated in court life and were free to consult with kadis and ulema without hiding their faces in hijab, a situation Ibn Batuta, a Maliki jurist, found objectionable. Ibn Batuta found the great cities of the Niger River rich and prosperous. The people were pious and steadfast in prayer, the scholars well versed in the Qur'an and Sunnah, the universities frequented by great scholars from Fez and Cairo and its great mosques filled with worshipers. Ibn Batuta returned home in 1355 and spent the remainder of his life in the service of his sovereign, Sultan Abu Inan of the Merinides. It was at the orders of this Sultan that the Rehla was composed and recorded by Ibn Juzayy using first hand accounts from Ibn Batuta.

The world that Ibn Batuta knew was soon to vanish, engulfed by the great plague of 1346, which moved like a black spider across the globe, obliterating entire cities with its sting and arresting the growth of Afro-

Eurasian civilizations for more than a generation. It was this spent world that faced the invasions of Timurlane of Samarqand, circa 1375.

Crescent over Isfahan

Pivotal as Persia was in the political developments of Muslim Asia, its primary contribution was to preserve, reinvigorate and transmit the spiritual legacy of Islam through its language, art and architecture. While the Arabs provided the ideational foundation of the edifice of Islam, it was the Persians who adorned it with beauty and embellished it with spirituality. The primary medium for this achievement was the Farsi (Persian) language, the lingua franca of the East and the court language of the dynasties in Persia, Turkey, Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Persia was the fountain of tasawwuf that extended the boundaries of Islam after the Mongol-Tartar deluge. Indeed, Persia was the land where the soul of Islam was rediscovered.

The geography of the Persian landmass makes it a central piece on the chessboard of the Asian landmass. Sitting astride the Persian plateau south of the Caspian Sea, it dominates and controls overland access from the Mediterranean to India and China. In the medieval world, the trade routes from Alexandria in Egypt and Aleppo in Syria ran through Persia. The northerly routes connected Tabriz in northwestern Persia to the Central Asian cities of Samarqand and Bukhara, thence through the ancient Silk Road through Sinkiang to China. The southern trade routes ran through Isfahan to Kabul in Afghanistan and from there through the passes of the Hindu Kush to the vast Indo-Gangetic plains. Large caravans plied these caravan routes carrying with them not only the goods produced by the principal trading centers of the ancient world but also scholars and adventurers. Persia became a crucible of ideas, melting its own ideas with the ancient wisdom of

China, India and the Mediterranean. Control of the Persian highlands gave a potential conqueror the ability to strike east or west, as was so decisively demonstrated by Hulagu Khan of the Mongols and Timurlane of the Tatars.

The battle of Al Qadasia (636-637) opened the Persian heartland to Islamic penetration. Victory at the battle of Nahawand (642) cemented the conquest. By the year 751, when Muslim armies overcame Chinese resistance at the battle of Tlas, the Islamic domain extended beyond the Indus River to the east and the Oxus River to the north. The Zoroastrian world, once so powerful that it projected its power from Athens to Kabul, was now a part of the larger Islamic world.

Some of the earliest Companions of the Prophet were Persians and their names are honored by Muslims the world over. Salman Farsi was one such distinguished Companion. During the first 40 years of Omayyad rule, the diffusion of Islam into the Persian heartland was slow. The Arabs made no attempt to force their religion on the Persians and left them alone as long they paid the protective tax and obeyed the laws of the state. Taxation, not conversion, appeared to be the primary concern of the Caliphs in Damascus. The conquering Arabs zealously guarded their tribal social boundaries. The few Persians who accepted Islam were treated as mawalis (protected people), a term that accorded the newcomers less than full social status in the community.

The situation changed with the ascent of Caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz (d. 619). Alone among the Omayyads, he made an attempt to reach out to the conquered people. Discriminatory taxes were abolished and the newcomers were accorded the same dignity as that given to the established Arab nobility. Conversion accelerated and when the Abbasid revolution erupted in 750, the Persian element tilted the balance of power in favor of the Abbasids. Foremost among the leaders of the revolution was Abu Muslim, a Persian general of singular capability and determination.

The Persians were carriers of an ancient civilization that had extensive interactions with the civilizations of China and India. They brought with them advanced technologies, effective methods of agriculture, a universal philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and a tradition of efficient state administration. Their presence was felt in the Islamic community as early as the time of the Prophet. It was Salman Farsi who suggested to the Prophet that a defensive trench be constructed around Madina to thwart the invading Meccan armies. The trench made a crucial difference in the outcome of the armed encounter, which was termed the Battle of the Trench. The Persian mastery of carpet weaving was noticed as early as the reign of Caliph Omar

ibn al Khattab. After the battle of Madayen, an exquisite carpet called farsh e bahaar was brought to Madina from the Persian capital. In the following centuries, the caliphs of Baghdad, as well as the Persian dynasties in the outlying provinces, encouraged the art of carpet weaving. The caliphs adopted Persian methods of administration. Persian and Byzantine techniques of construction were used in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem as well as in the extensive system of aqueducts built by the Omayyads. The Zoroastrians of Persia also had a unitary concept of heaven and the Arabs accorded them the status of “People of the Book”, a status equivalent to that of the Christians and the Jews.

The Persians immediately made their presence felt in the intellectual domain. The Arabs had established themselves in military cantonments which in time grew to be centers of intellectual activity. Most of the Persians who had accepted Islam migrated to these centers so as to establish a cultural and religious linkage with the resident Arabs. As the city-cantonments grew in size, so did the need to define the social and judicial framework of the evolving community and its interfaces with other communities. This need gave birth to the sciences of Fiqh. The city of Kufa, a border town between the Arabic-speaking and Persian-speaking worlds became a center of learning and a place of congregation for scholars. One such scholar was Imam Abu Haneefa, after whom the Hanafi School of Fiqh is named. Imam Abu Haneefa was of Afghan-Persian parentage and was familiar with the concerns of the non-Arab segments of the community. The school of Fiqh evolved by him and his disciples reflected these concerns.

It was in the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Mamun (d. 833) that the Persians became a decisive political force in the Abbasid Empire. Mamun’s victory over his brother Amin (810-813) for succession to the Caliphate was in no small measure due to the intervention of the Persians. Mamun’s armies had a large number of Persian soldiers and Tahir, a dynamic Persian officer, led them. The victorious Caliph rewarded Tahir for his fidelity by appointing him the governor of southern Iraq. The Tahirids soon became autonomous and while maintaining their allegiance to Baghdad, established the Tahirid dynastic rule. They introduced Persian court etiquette and were the first to encourage the use of the Farsi language in the official circles.

By the beginning of the 10 th century, Persians outnumbered Arabs in the lands east of the Tigris River. The preponderance of Persians had a

profound impact on the political, linguistic and intellectual landscape of the Islamic community. The Tahirids established a Persian dynasty (820-822) with their capital at Neshapur. Mathematicians like Al Khwarizmi (d. 862) and historians like Al Tabari (d. 923) found patronage in the Persian courts.

The sciences of Fiqh and hadith flourished in Persia as they did in the Arab heartland. One of the greatest of the muhaddithin, Imam al Bukhari (d. 869) lived during this period in Khorasan. Imam al Bukhari traveled through much of the Islamic world, collected and examined over 300,000 ahadith and after a rigorous scrutiny, selected approximately 7,000 as valid. His collection of ahadith is one of the most authoritative ones in the Islamic sciences and is accorded the same honor as the collections of Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq, Imam Muslim, Imam Tirmidhi, Imam Abu Dawud, Imam Malik Ibn Anas and Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal.

Persian political influence reached its zenith under the Buyids who rose to power in southern Iraq (932). Increasing conversion had shifted the center of gravity of the empire away from Baghdad into the outlying provinces both in eastern Persia and the Maghrib. Court intrigues had sapped the strength of the Caliphate. There was increasing military pressure from the Fatimids in Egypt. The Abbasid Caliph Mustakfi, desperate to seek help, invited the Buyid prince Ahmed to defend Baghdad against the Fatimids. The Buyids, who practiced the Ithna Ashari Fiqh, were only too happy to assume the role of protectors of the Sunni Caliphate in Baghdad. In return, Ahmed received the title of

Mu'iz ad Dawla and was given the reigns of the empire. For several years thereafter, the Persian Buyids were effective rulers of Baghdad until the Seljuks rescued the Abbasids.

It was under the Samanids of Khorasan (901) that the Persian language, arts and architecture blossomed into their fullest expression. The cities of Samarqand, Bukhara, Neshapur, Mashad and Herat grew into world-class centers of learning. Samanid patronage produced a galaxy of notable men of science and letters like Abu Nasr Al Farabi (d. 950) and Abu Ali Ibn Sina (d. 1037). The patronage of the arts continued when the Ghaznavids displaced the Samanids (962-1026). Mahmud of Ghazna made his capital city a beacon of art and culture. Al Baruni (d. 1048), one of the foremost historians and chroniclers of the age, lived at the court of Mahmud. Firdowsi, one of the most celebrated Farsi poets and author of the Shah

Nama, lived in Ghazna. Firdowsi composed the Shah Nama, a classic poem that extols the achievements of pre-Islamic heroes of Persia, as a tribute to Mahmud. The great poet was disappointed with the reward he received for the masterpiece whereupon he composed a poem belittling the emperor and sent it to Mahmud. The emperor, who was on his campaigns in India, regretted the treatment he had given the poet and sent a more handsome reward. Firdowsi did not live to receive the gifts. As the camels laden with the gifts entered through one gate of the city of Ghazna, the body of Firdowsi was being carried out for burial through another gate.

However, it was the Mongol deluge that transformed the landscape of Islamic history and brought the Persian element into the forefront of Islamic intellectual activity. When Genghiz Khan descended from the highlands of Central Asia onto the valley of Farghana (1219), Islamic civilization was primarily city based. As conversion had proceeded in Persia and Central Asia, so had the migration of people to the cities. This movement had resulted primarily from economic considerations. Official patronage was focused on a few principal towns that became magnets for scholars and peasants alike. The management of social interactions in an urban milieu demanded a heavy emphasis on the rules of the Shariah and its juridical exposition in the schools of

Fiqh. Arabic, the language of the Qur'an and of the various schools of Fiqh, was the language of the learned circles.

Genghiz Khan destroyed the urban centers of learning. In some cities, more than 90% of the population was slaughtered. Throbbing urban centers became grazing land for Mongol horses. Mosques and madrasas alike were razed. The Arabic-speaking learned elite perished or fled, some towards India, others towards Egypt and Anatolia. With its Arabic-centered urban civilization in ruins, the leadership of the remnants of the community fell to the rural areas where Farsi was the spoken language. And it was from the huts and hermitages of the Persian landscape that Islam emerged once again to conquer the conquerors and carry forth its message to the far corners of Asia, Europe and Africa.

Historical currents had prepared the world of Islam for just such a calamity. More than a hundred years before the Mongols descended from the Gobi desert, the heart of Islam was beating to a different rhythm from

that of the kazis and ulema with their zealous emphasis on the finer points of Fiqh.

Imam Al Ghazzali (d. 1111), perhaps the single most important integrator of Islamic knowledge in the first millennium of Islam, had brought tasawwuf into the mainstream of Islamic sciences. Indeed, through his own example, he had made tasawwuf the focus of Islamic life. Following his work, intellectual activity in the spiritual dimension of Islam accelerated. The towering personality of the age who represented this dimension was Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani (d 1186).

Shaykh Abu Muhammed Mohiuddin Abdul Qader Jeelani was born in Jeelan in northern Persia in 1077. It was a period of intense intellectual activity and the Shaykh received his early training from local ulema. In 1095, as a young man of eighteen, he set out to Baghdad seeking additional knowledge and training. He sought and received instruction from the luminaries of his age, including Shaykh Abu Wafa Ibn Aqil, Shaykh Muhammed Al Baqlani and Shaykh Abu Zakariya Tabrizi. At the age of fifty, he received his ijaza (diploma) from Shaykh Kazi Abi Saeed Al Muqrami and was commissioned to head the madrasah of Shaykh Kazi Abi Saeed in Baghdad.

Shaykh Abdul Qader's fame soon spread throughout the land. The courtyard of the madrasah was too small to hold the crowds, so the lectures were moved to the Jami Masjid. The Jami Masjid too proved to be too small so the lectures were moved to a vast open field on the outskirts of the city. It is said that as many as 70,000 people listened to the Shaykh at one time. Scribes recorded his sermons and passed them on for posterity.

The lectures of the Shaykh covered every facet of Islamic life, including kalam, hadith, Fiqh, tafheem ul Qur'an (commentaries on the Qur'an), ethics, Seerat un Nabi (life and example of the Prophet) and tasawwuf. He was strict in his observance of the Shariah and chided those who were remiss in their observance of its injunctions. In the intense spiritual atmosphere of the age, many self-proclaimed ulema claimed that their special insights into religion gave them an excuse not to observe the obligatory prayers, fasting and zakat. Shaykh Abdul Qader chided them and declared that any position not based on the Shariah was atheism. The Shaykh's exposition of tasawwuf, recorded in Al Fathu Rabbani, is a veritable fountain of spirituality and has inspired Muslims and many non-

Muslims for over 800 years. The Shaykh's humble disposition endeared him to the poor and his forthrightness and rectitude brought him the respect of the high and mighty. Sultans and emperors alike waited to see him and partake of his wisdom.

Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani inspired a galaxy of sufi sages in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. After he passed away in 1186, his disciples carried his message to the far corners of the Islamic world. The Qadariya sufi tareeqa was established to give concrete expression to his spiritual and social ideals. It was the first of the many tareeqas that were to dominate the Islamic landscape after the 13th century. The Qadariya tareeqa radiated its influence to every continent of the Old World and was instrumental in bringing millions into the fold of Islam. As late as the 19th century, Uthman Dan Fuduye, inspired by visions of the great Shaykh, waged his struggle to establish a just social-political order in West Africa. In India and Pakistan he is referred to as Ghouse ul Azam Dastagir and is accorded a position of honor next to only that of the Prophet and the early Companions.

The work of Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani and those who immediately followed him was the life raft that rescued Islam after the Mongol devastations. For an entire generation, between 1219 and 1250, the horsemen from Mongolia roamed the Eurasian continent destroying ancient cities, reshaping, reforming and remolding entire societies. The concurrent challenge from the Crusaders of the West was no less menacing. Indeed, the Crusaders made a determined attempt to convert the Mongols to Christianity, or at least to forge an alliance with them with the avowed intent of extirpating Islam. Following the Battle of Ayn Jalut (1261) the military threat subsided but the threat of losing Asia to non-Islamic ideologies remained.

And it was tasawwuf that rose to take up the challenge and rescue Islam in its gravest hour. The genius of tasawwuf lay in its ecstatic and inclusive character. It was the Islam of the heart, not of the mind. The disappearance of a city culture that had supported the Islamic edifice of Fiqh and fatwa had thrown the mantle of leadership to the countryside where Islam was based on emotion and devotion. The khanqahs established by the Qadariya and other sufi orders became the focus of Islamic life. A qanqah had five distinct functions. First it was a mosque wherein the faithful offered their

obligatory prayers. Second, it was a madrasah where instruction was provided on the Qur'an and the sciences of Fiqh. Third, it was a retreat where individuals could seek solitude and focus on their inner selves or congregate for dhikr (recital of the name of God). Fourth, it was a place to mold the very character of people under the watchful guidance of a shaykh and teach them the virtues of selfless service, chivalry, courage, devotion to the Divine and a universal outlook on life. And fifth, it was a place of rest for the weary traveler, or a refuge for the family fleeing from the persecutions of the times.

Persian ecstatic Islam more than met its challenges. By 1295, the Il-Khanid (Mongol) Ghazan accepted Islam and Persia was back in the forefront of Islamic life. From the Persian heartland, Islam spread to the subcontinent of India-Pakistan and projected itself into the Archipelago of Malaysia and Indonesia. To the west, it reinforced its presence in sub-Saharan Africa and grew to be the dominant faith on that continent. The Ottomans who emerged after the Mongol-Tartar deluge were themselves heavily influenced by tasawwuf. And it was out of the caldron of sufi ideas that the Safavid dynasty emerged.

With the destruction of the urban centers of learning wherein Arabic was the medium of instruction, Farsi emerged as the medium of expression for ecstatic Islam. Five hundred years of association with Islam had transformed Farsi and had exposed it to the rich lexicon of Arabic. And now it was the turn of Farsi to take center stage. It was through Farsi that sublime poetry and exquisite prose found their expression in the post-Mongol, Timurid, Safavid, Mogul and Ottoman periods.

Perhaps the greatest of the Farsi poets and one whose impact is still felt in the modern world, was Maulana Muhammed Khudawandagar Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273). No other savant personifies the transition from the pre-Mongol urban-empirical Islamic civilization to the postMongol rural-ecstatic civilization, as does Rumi. His Islamic name was Muhammed; Khudawandagar and Jalaluddin were his titles. He is called Rumi due to his residence in Konya which was located in a province referred to at the time as "Rum", meaning an old province of the Roman Empire. His disciples called him Maulana (meaning, the learned sage). He was born to Persian-Afghan parents in 1207 in the city of Balkh in Afghanistan. His father, Bahauddin Walad was a scholar of repute, a sufi master of the Kubrawiyah

tareeqa and was held in high esteem by the local people. The sensitive mind of Rumi absorbed the scholarship and spirituality of his parents. But the quiet life of Balkh was soon shattered by the firestorm from Mongolia. As Genghiz Khan descended on Khorasan and advanced towards Persia and Afghanistan, Bahauddin Walad fled to Nishapur where the young Rumi met the celebrated poet Fareeduddin Attar, author of the classic *Mantiq at Tayr* (Conference of the Birds). Attar saw in the young lad the potential of a genius and gave him a copy of his works as a gift.

The Mongol avalanche soon engulfed all of Persia and Bahauddin fled once again with his family, this time to Baghdad. News of the arrival of Shaykh Bahauddin reached Kaikubad, the Seljuk ruler of Konya. Kaikubad was a patron of scholars. He invited Bahauddin to settle in Konya whereupon the Rumi family set out for Anatolia, visiting the cities of Mecca and Madina on the way and performing their Hajj. Shaykh Bahauddin died in 1231 leaving the young Jalaluddin in charge of the madrasah he had founded.

In 1232, Rumi met Shaykh Burhanuddin Muhaqqiq Tirmidhi, himself a student of Shaykh Bahauddin and became his murid. Under Shaykh Burhanuddin's direction, Rumi mastered the sciences of kalam, hadith, Fiqh, tafheem e Qur'an, Arabic and Farsi grammar and tasawwuf. But the luminary who inspired Maulana Rumi to his ecstatic poetry was Shaykh Shamsuddin Tabrizi. Maulana Rumi met Shaykh Tabrizi in 1245 and the two forged a spiritual friendship that inspired the Maulana to compose poetry. When Shaykh Tabrizi disappeared from Konya in 1247, the Maulana was distraught and sent messengers to look for the Shaykh all over Anatolia and Syria. The search proved futile, but the Shaykh had impelled the spiritual ocean of Maulana just as the setting moon impels the waves of the ocean. The Maulana poured forth his ecstasy in his first collection, *Diwan e Sham e Tabrizi*, a work of unmatched rhythm, music, alchemy and spirituality.

The work that bestowed a universal stature on Maulana Rumi was the *Mathnawi*. A collection of over 27,000 verses, the *Mathnawi* is a veritable rhapsody of love of the human soul for the Divine. The Maulana drew upon the scriptures as well as the classics of Farsi and Arabic to construct a symphony of the soul in its journey towards the Master. Each verse is of incomparable beauty, each story of unsurpassed wisdom.

It is said in sufi circles that God took a drop of love from his infinite Ocean of Love, without in any way increasing or decreasing the depth of the Ocean and bestowed it upon humankind, dividing it equally between every man and woman ever created. If one were to claim that the Maulana captured the very essence of that drop of Divine Love that has sustained humankind, it would not be an exaggeration.

The Mathnawi is the epitome of Islamic tasawwuf. It has had a profound impact on Islamic culture and poetry, especially in the arc extending from Europe through Turkey, Persia, Central Asia and the Subcontinent. It has been translated into most modern languages. The Maulana stood at the pinnacle of spirituality as expressed in the Farsi language. His work continued to inspire Muslim writers and poets through the centuries. Some, like Shamsuddin Muhammed Hafiz (d. 1391), approached the spiritual heights of the Maulana. Other great ones like Abdur Rahman Jami (d. 1492) and Mohammed Iqbal (d. 1938) paid him homage. It is a tribute to this sage that the most popular poet in America today is not Shakespeare or Milton but Jalaluddin Rumi.

The legacy of Persia was the spiritual archetype that dominated Islam for 500 years. It was the renowned sufi masters, men like Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani, Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti, Maulana Rumi, Shaykh Bahauddin Naqshband and Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi who served as role models for Muslims. Paupers and emperors alike sought to emulate their example. Architects and artisans derived their inspiration from them. Reformers and counter-reformers alike used their names to draw attention to their movements. Timurlane, conqueror of Asia, was an ardent supporter of sufi masters. A sufi shaykh trained the Ottoman Sultan Muhammed, conqueror of Istanbul. The Safavid dynasty of Persia grew out of a sufi movement. Mogul Emperors Akbar and Jehangir were so devoted to Shaykh Salim Chishti that they performed pilgrimages to his qanqah on foot. Uthman dan Fuduye initiated his reforms in West Africa in the name of Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani. And Shaykh Shamil of the Caucasus who resisted the Russians for thirty years was inspired by the Naqshbandi tareeqa.

The Persian spiritual influence extended to the architecture of postMongol Islam. Islamic architecture is a projection of the heavens on earth and seeks to realize in the matrix of material form a hint of the transcendence of heaven. Hence geometry is divided into two parts:

functional geometry and supernal geometry. Functional geometry is the exoteric aspect of mathematical forms; supernal geometry describes the meaning behind those forms. Thus a dot is not just the limit of space as defined in mathematics, but also the onset of the creation of space. A dot moves and creates a line, which is not just a linear connection of points but the beginning of creation of space and a reminder (in the Arabic and Farsi languages) of the name of Allah. A line rotates and creates a circle, which becomes a representation of justice inasmuch as it shows no directional bias. And so on.

The inherent focus on transcendence enabled Muslim architects to realize in the construction of mosques and minarets alike something of the transcendence that lies hidden in geometrical forms. The genius of Persian architecture was that it applied that transcendence to the non-religious domain as well. Specifically, the application of supernal geometry with its emphasis on symbols and meaning to the construction of tombs and cenotaphs resulted in the erection of monuments of unparalleled beauty. The Timurids, the Safavids and the Ottomans all constructed tombs over the graves of sages and royalty alike to capture something of the essence of heaven on earth.

This art form reached its pinnacle in the Mogul court of Shah Jehan who built the Taj Mahal in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. The erection of this monument with its unsurpassed beauty and harmony could have been possible only in the framework of an ecstatic Islam in which love, not ritual, was the first step in the ascent of man to heaven. Conversely, such a structure would not have been possible in the classical age of Islam with its heavy emphasis on doctrine, the rational and the ritual. Classical Islam erected the edifice of law. In the post-Mongol period, the edifice of law was used by the Persian-speaking people as a platform on which they erected monuments of love.

From a historian's perspective, the most important contribution of the Farsi-speaking world was the institution of *zawiya* (the Turkish *tekke*). The Persians did not invent this institution any more than they invented the science of *tasawwuf*. But it was in Persia and in the contiguous regions of Anatolia and the subcontinent that it emerged as the central institution of community life. The *zawiya* was based on the mosque-madrasah paradigm that had existed from the earliest days of Islam. The Persians-and the Turks

and the Indo-Pakistanis—extended its function to include the cultivation of religious ecstasy through dhikr and the remembrance of God. The zawiya also became a nucleus for youth movements wherein young men learned the virtues of chivalry and courage and nurtured their character under the watchful eye of a sufi shaykh. Ibn Batuta, in his *Rehla*, describes in detail the zawiya he visited in Anatolia, Persia and India. Each sufi order had its own zawiya in which young men—and women—gathered to pray, to learn the Qur'an and Fiqh, to perform dhikr and to cultivate a comradeship based on faith. As commercial activity resumed after the Mongol destructions, these zawiya also became centers of guilds and trade associations. A calligrapher, for instance, would undergo years of training in the control of hand muscles, preparation and maintenance of his tools, concentration on his work and focus on his soul. He would also be a member of one tareeqa or the other from which he would learn the discipline of the heart, which alone is the springhead of creative work. The sufis made Divine Love accessible to the most illiterate peasant as well as the most sophisticated scholar. It was this immediacy of Divine Presence that molded the character of Muslims for five hundred years after Genghiz Khan. And the zawiya was the institution that made this possible.

The zawiya spread to all parts of the Islamic world and were instrumental in ensuring the stability of Muslim societies up until the 18th century. In the largely rural milieu of India, Pakistan, Persia, Turkey and North Africa, the historical role of the zawiya was pivotal. It was the men of the zawiya who were the backbone of the Turkish marches and the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire. It was the men of the zawiya who took Islam from Delhi and Lahore to the far corners of the subcontinent. It was the men of the zawiya who triumphed over the Portuguese at the Battle of al Qasr al Kabir (1578) and rescued North Africa from the same fate that had befallen Muslim Spain.

In the 18th century, the zawiya came up against the cold efficiency of the joint stock companies from Europe. The encounter took place just as political and social decay was overtaking the Islamic world. In the encounter, the joint stock companies triumphed. But the spiritual legacy of the zawiya endures to this day as a haunting reminder of a traditional Islam that once dominated the interconnecting landmass of Asia, Europe and Africa.

THE TURKS AND THE TATARS

Summary

Timurlane, perhaps the greatest conqueror the world has known, burst upon history in the last quarter of the 15th century. Gathering together the Tatars of Farghana under one flag, he consolidated his hold on Samarqand in Central Asia. The Mongol empire had decayed and its place taken up by smaller kingdoms. In a series of campaigns lasting more than a quarter century, Timur defeated the Khans of Mongolistan and the Caspian Sea, the Il Khanids of Persia, the Tughlaqs of India, the Golden Horde of Russia and the Mamlukes of Egypt. But his greatest victory was over the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara in 1402. The Ottoman Sultan, Bayazid I, a great conqueror in his own right, was taken prisoner and Anatolia was subjugated. Timur died on his way to conquering China. The Tatar conquests swept away the old dynasties of Asia and from the dust of Timurlane's conquests, emerged the Safavid dynasty of Persia, the Moghul dynasty of India and a resurgent Ottoman Empire in Eurasia.

Timur of Samarqand

By the year 1395, the Byzantine capital of Constantinople was surrounded on all sides by Ottoman territories. The inexorable advance of the Turks had made them masters of southeastern Europe and Anatolia. Ottoman cavalry had crossed the River Danube and marched onto the plains of Hungary. Desperate to save his throne, the Greek Emperor Manuel appealed to Pope Boniface IX and the sovereigns of Europe for help. In 1396, the counts and barons of Europe answered the call. Taking time off from their civil strife and the Hundred Years War, the soldiers of the Cross from France, Germany, England, Holland and Hungary met the Turks at the Battle of Nicopolis. The Crusaders suffered a crushing defeat and victory belonged to Ottoman Sultan Bayazid. After Nicopolis, Europe had no stomach to fight and became more interested in trade with the fledgling Ottoman Empire. Bayazid proceeded to lay siege to the Byzantine capital. Dejected, Emperor Manuel was preparing to surrender Constantinople to Sultan Bayazid when help arrived from an unexpected quarter, namely, Timur of Samarqand.

Throughout the 13 th and 14th centuries, the Pope and the monarchs of Europe made a concerted effort to woo the Mongols. The fate of Asia, indeed of the Old World, hung in the balance, as the Mongol princes toyed with their preference first for Christianity, then for Islam and yet at other times for Buddhism. After the death of Genghiz Khan, his vast empire had been divided into four major regions. One was the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty of China ruled by the Ka-Khans (meaning, the Great Khans). Kublai Khan (1268-1294), grandson of Genghiz, was the greatest ruler of that dynasty. The second was the Chagtai

Empire (named for the son of Genghiz), centered in Samarqand and including the vast steppes of Central Asia as well as the fertile valley of Farghana and extending south to Afghanistan. The third was Persia, ruled by the Il-Khans (meaning, deputies of the Great Khan). The fourth was the vast region between Hungary and the Caspian Sea, including much of what is today Russia, which was ruled by the Tatars (called the Golden Horde

because Batu, the son of Jochi and grandson of Genghiz Khan had an emblem of gold on his tent).

By the year 1300, Islam had won the battle of the heart over Christianity and Buddhism and the Il-Khans of Persia, the Chagtai of Central Asia and the Tatars of the Volga had all accepted Islam. Only Mongolia and China remained outside the fold of Islam and the KaKhans were submerged among the Chinese. In Russia and Central Asia, the Mongols exercised their authority through their governors and satraps. By common agreement, these satraps were Tatars, a Turkoman people related to but otherwise separate and distinct from the Mongols. The Tatars had been conquered by Genghiz Khan but had later joined the Mongol armies in their invasions of Khorasan, Russia and Persia. A truce existed between the Mongols and the Tatars whereby sovereignty would belong to the Mongols while the Tatars would serve them as their administrators and regents.

In the first half of the 14th century, by the year 1350, all four of the Mongol regions experienced civil wars and a breakup of central authority. The Il-Khanid Empire in Persia fell apart after the death of Prince Abu Sayeed. In the latter half of the 14th century, Persia was ruled by a host of princes, called the Muzaffars. Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Herat each had its own sovereign. These petty princes waged war against each other and continuously raised taxes on the peasantry to pay for their internal fights. The peasantry suffered. Similarly, the Chagtai region, which extended from Afghanistan to Mongolia, was contested between various warlords. The Tatars of the Volga, a loose collection of Mongol tribes, was united only when they raided the Russian hinterlands for booty. Indeed, the Tatars burned down Moscow in 1382. Out of this period of instability rose Timur, commonly known as Timurlane, who was perhaps the greatest conqueror the world has ever known.

Timur is studied in regional histories as the conqueror who defeated the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara (1402) or the man who slaughtered over 100,000 persons in Delhi (1399). Such a narrow approach does injustice to this great conqueror. The extent of Timur's conquests must be measured in the context of observations made by writers of the era. Ibn Batuta, writing in 1360, said that there were seven great emperors in the world: (1) The Merinide Sultan of Morocco (2) The Mamluke Sultan of Egypt (3) The Ottoman Sultan of Turkey (4) The Il-Khan of Persia (5) The Khan of the

Chagtai Empire in Central Asia (6) The Tughlaq Emperor of India and (7) The Ming Emperor of China. One may disregard the Sultan of Morocco whose name Ibn Batuta had to include to be politically correct to his own sovereign. Timur conquered five of the other six emperors. From Delhi to Moscow, from Amu Darya to the Sinai desert of Egypt, the flag of Timur fluttered unchallenged. He conquered Russia and destroyed the power of the Tatars of the Volga (1385-1389). He captured and burned Isfahan (1398) and Delhi (1399) and brought an end to the Tughlaq dynasty of India. He took and burned Damascus (1401) and forced the Mamlukes of Egypt to pay him tribute. He defeated the Ottomans, captured Bayazid at the Battle of Ankara (1402) and almost obliterated the Ottoman Empire in its infancy. Only China escaped the wrath of his sword because Timur died on his way to conquering China (1405). Timur's Empire extended over seven million square miles, an area more than double that of the United States. The rise of modern Russia may be dated from the time of Timur, because it was he who destroyed the power of the Volga Tatars under whose yoke the Russians had toiled for 200 years. It was only after the death of Timur that the Dukes of Moscow and St. Petersburg started the consolidation of their national territory, changing in the process the history of the world.

In making this assessment of Timur, it must be remembered that he was a devout Muslim who carried a portable royal mosque with his army. His entourage always included ulema and kadis. But it must also be remembered that most of his conquests—and his destructions—were also directed at Muslims. Islamic history, since the time of Muawiya, has been subject to a tension between the superordinate values of Islam and the more mundane values of material gain and personal ego. We see this tension in the extreme in the person of Timur. Whenever he conquered a territory, he took great care not to destroy the mosques and sufi tombs or to kill the ulema. But he was a born warrior whose instincts for battle impelled him to seek the mastery of the known world. The secular instincts in him won over the sacred, the love of power triumphed over the injunctions not to shed the blood of fellow believers. He was lenient to those who accepted his mastership but was merciless to those who opposed him. These two currents, the secular and the sacred, run in parallel throughout Islamic history.

Timur was a Tatar and was born in Khorasan near Samarqand in 1327. In an age when the royal scepter was won by the sword, Central Asia was the cradle of conquerors and would-be conquerors. The horsemen of Central Asia poured forth time and again, conquering the more settled inhabitants of northern India, Persia and territories beyond. In time, they would settle down among the local population, only to be invaded by a fresh wave of nomads from the Asian plateau. Timur grew up in this cradle of conquerors, embodying in his person an instinct for war and intrigue that has rarely been surpassed in world history.

As a young man, Timur was influenced by a sufi Shaykh Zainuddin and he retained a healthy respect for things spiritual. The Chagtai Empire had all but disintegrated. The last of the Mongol Chagtai rulers had retreated beyond the Amu Darya. The Mongol Khan Tughlaq had appointed Kazgan, a Tatar, as the viceroy of Samarqand. Timur sought his first job serving Kazgan. The young man's valor was soon recognized at the court and he became a favorite of the bahadurs, the elite guard. Kazgan was so impressed by the young man that he offered his own granddaughter, the beautiful Aljai Khatun, for whom the beautiful tomb of Bibi Khanum in Samarqand is named.

Timur's marriage to the Aljai Khatun Agha, granddaughter of Kazgan, was a happy one. Aljai, like Timur, was a Muslim. Like her Tatar sisters from Central Asia, she rode a horse without a veil, participated in affairs of the state, accompanied her husband to theaters of war and ministered to public affairs in her domain of authority. She bore Timur a son who was named Jehangir. In recognition of Timur's services, Kazgan made him a Ming-bashi (leader of 1,000 horsemen). But the times were too unstable for Timur to enjoy his peace and quiet for long. The region was seething with unrest, filled with armed men, able and ambitious, each with his dream of glory and riches.

Kazgan was killed in an internal squabble among the Tatars and the territory was thrown into chaos. To restore order, the Mongol Khan Tughlaq descended from the north. Timur supported Tughlaq and was rewarded with the title Tuman-Bashi, leader of 10,000 horsemen. But when Tughlaq returned north to his home base, his tyrannical general Bikijuk turned on the Tatars, imprisoned their learned men and carried off their women and children. Timur resisted, did what he could to save the women and the

children, but the dissensions among the Tatars were too deep for united action. When the Mongol Khan Tughlaq heard that Timur had fought his appointed general, he gave orders for Timur's capture and death. With the instincts of a shrewd warrior, Timur sensed a disaster and fled south with his bride and his loyal followers.

Great men are made by adversity. Over the next several years, Timur wandered through the hills of Afghanistan and the deserts of Turkoman lands. He felt the scorching heat of the desert and experienced the blistering winds of the Hindu Kush Mountains. It was during these wanderings, while trying to help the chief of Qandahar put down a local rebellion, that Timur was struck by an arrow to his foot, which left him limping for the rest of his life and earned him the title, Timurlane (Timur Leng, or Timur the lame).

Throughout Islamic history, Muslim people have used the call of faith to rally the faithful against foreign domination. The oppression of the Mongols was unbearable for the Tatars. The ulema and sufis of Bukhara and Samarqand appealed to the Tatar chieftains to unite and stand up to the Mongols. The Tatars heeded the call and in 1367, fought a pitched battle against the Mongols at the Syr Darya. All the Tatar emirs, the Afghans, Persians from northern Persia and Timur participated. Fate was against the Tatars and they lost. But the city of Samarqand itself held. With each encounter, Timur's standing with his people increased. His determination, courage and leadership in war impressed them. The Tatars were ready for united action and what was needed was a leader. The ulema and the sufis, the emirs and the chieftains met in Samarqand and elected Timur as their leader in 1368. This was the beginning of the Timurid Empire and a turning point in world history.

Timur consolidated his base around Samarqand, cultivating the loyalty of friend and foe alike through gifts, titles and endowments. His first action was to clear the Mongols from Tatar areas south of the Amu Darya. This was followed up with raids beyond the river into the Mongol heartland. In a series of battles fought between 1370 and 1379, the Mongol hold over the valley of Farghana was broken. Conflict between a strong Timurid presence in Samarqand and his neighbors was inevitable. The Tatars of Khorasan and the Caspian Sea had long profited by raiding the Tatars in the Farghana valley. Their Chief, Yusuf challenged Timur but died of natural causes before a conclusive battle between the two could take place. Timur

proceeded to annex Khorasan, Khiva and the lower Volga basin to his domain. Turning his attention south to Afghanistan, he displaced the Emir of Herat, Ghiasuddin and added this city to his dominions. Herat was the first of the great cities to fall into Timur's hands. At that time, it had more than a quarter of a million inhabitants and rivaled Tabriz, Damascus and Delhi as a center of learning, art and culture. Timur carried off the wealth of Herat and its many artisans and architects, a pattern he would repeat after the conquests of Isfahan, Delhi, Tabriz, Damascus and Ankara. After each conquest, the wealth of Samarqand grew and the city was transformed into a veritable paradise of blue-domed mosques and mausoleums. Timur's power in Central Asia was now unchallenged and his flag fluttered from the Amu Darya to the Indus. From the plateau of the Hindu Kush mountains, the great conqueror could look down upon the vast expanse of Asia and Europe, ready to profit from the devastations of the Black Plague which had devastated much of the old world between 1336 and 1370.

Campaigns around the Caspian Sea brought Timur face to face with the Tatars of the Volga (the Golden Horde). The Golden Horde had kept Russia at bay for more than 200 years, raiding eastern Europe as far as Poland and Hungary. The Russian counts were obliged to pay an annual tribute to the Tatars. When they did not (or could not) they were severely punished, their territories invaded and plundered. Resistance was futile and retribution was swift and merciless. In 1376, Dimitrius, Count of Moscow, gathered together 100,000 armed Russian peasants and defeated a platoon of the Golden Horde in a battle on the River Don. The following year, the Golden Horde returned, razing the land as they followed the retreating Russians and in 1377, burned down the city of Moscow.

Toktamish, chief of the Golden Horde, could not tolerate the growing power of Timur to the east. Their two egos clashed. As the Mongol saying went, "the world could not have two suns at the same time". A dispute over borders provided the cause for hostilities. In an initial skirmish near the Caspian Sea, Toktamish was trounced, but he returned the following year to raid border areas. This time, Timur followed him deep into enemy territory. He was always meticulous in his planning and made his moves with the dexterity of a grand chess master. Great generals succeed, in part because they plan their campaigns with the utmost care, down to the minutest detail. The careful preparations made by Timur during this grand march remind us

of similar preparations made by Genghiz Khan in 1218-1219 when he crossed the Gobi desert on his way to Khorasm. Every soldier was given an extra horse and was provided with defensive armor as well as bows, arrows, a sword and smaller weapons. Marching with him were not only the Tatars from the valley of Farghana, but Afghans, Turks and Persians. Timur's pursuit of Toktamish took him 2,000 miles into Russia, past the Rivers Ural and Volga, through the modern city of Kazan to the outskirts of Moscow. Overtaken by Timur's scouts, Toktamish was forced to give battle. It was a battle of titans. Timur, a great master of cavalry maneuvers on the open plains, prevailed. Toktamish was forced to flee. The remnants of his army were pursued and cut down.

The power of the Golden Horde was smashed, never to appear again as a cohesive force in eastern Europe. This was the year 1385, an important landmark in global history, when an empire died and a new empire was born. It was Timur who freed Russia from the Tatars. It was only after 1385 that Russia began to emerge as a European power that grew, over the centuries, through consolidation and conquest, to occupy much of eastern Europe and northern Asia. For the better part of the twentieth century, it dominated the landmass of Eurasia as the former Soviet Union.

Great men are born with an indomitable spirit, to excel, to dominate, to conquer. Perhaps it is through them that humankind fights its losing battle to conquer death itself. Timur was made of the same metal as Alexander, Genghiz Khan and Napoleon. He went for world conquest not just because he considered himself heir to the empire of Genghiz, but also because it was there, in the same sense that men and women want to climb Mount Everest, because it is there. Timur came closer than anyone in history to realizing his dream. Were it not for his death on his way towards the conquest of China, he might well have succeeded.

After the conquest of Russia, Timur consolidated his position as the Emir of all Tatars. From the heights of Central Asia, he could look down upon the decaying empires of Persia, India and China and feel the same urge that a mighty lion feels when he comes across a herd of wounded sheep. To the south of his empire lay Persia. The Il-Khans, descendants of Genghiz Khan, had succumbed to the pleasures of Persia and had disappeared. In their place had emerged the Muzaffars, a family notorious in history for internal squabbles. When the Shah of Persia, an ally and protégée of Timur died, his

son Zainul Abedin ascended the throne. Zainul proved to be a weakling, unable to hold his territories together. Whereupon, the family of Muzaffars seized power, carving up Persia into small fiefdoms, ruled by different members of the family. Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Herat each had its own king.

The instability to the south of his borders was intolerable to Timur. In 1386, he marched again. The destination was the city of Isfahan, noted at that time, as it is today, for its beauty as well as its magnificent monuments and learned people. The city offered no resistance and opened its gates. Timur promised not to plunder the city if a ransom was paid. Out went the noblemen of Isfahan to collect the demanded booty. All was quiet for a day. Then, in the darkness of night, some of the townsfolk attacked Timur's guards. In retrospect, it is not clear what happened, but the result was a disaster for the city. In the morning, Timur gave a general order for a massacre. The inhabitants of the city were hunted down and a mountain of skulls was created in the main bazaar. This was the first of the general massacres that Timur is noted for, something that he was to repeat later in Lahore, Delhi, Damascus and dozens of lesser cities. Almost 100,000 Isfahanis was killed. Timur, having obliterated all resistance, appointed his own governor in the city. Shiraz submitted without a fight. From there, Timur lunged south to the Persian Gulf and marched back northwards in an arc subduing the tribes of Qandahar and western Afghanistan. It was during this campaign that Timur cleared the mountain hideouts of the Fatimid Assassins. After Timur, the Assassins ceased to be a dreaded force that they once were in the body politic of Islam. Timur returned home to Samarqand, with the treasures of the looted cities, as well as many of the noted scholars, artisans and architects of Persia. The latter he put to work, to embellish his own city, which became in his lifetime a veritable garden of blue-tiled domes. By now, Timur was the master of Russia, Central Asia and Persia.

The addition of Persia to Timur's empire caused an alarm in Baghdad, Cairo and Ankara. Shah Ahmed of Baghdad looked to the Mamluke Turks of Cairo for protection. Cairo was at the time the premier city of Islam and the seat of the Caliphate. The Mamlukes controlled Egypt, Syria, Arabia and all the lands to the west of the Euphrates. As custodians of the Caliphate, the Mamlukes were bound to come to the help of the Sultan of Baghdad. An alliance was formed between Sultan Ahmed of Baghdad and

the Mamlukes of Egypt. The first act of the alliance was to dethrone Timur's governor from Isfahan and install a satrap, Mansur, as the lord of Baghdad. This drew the wrath of Timur. He advanced against Persia a second time. The Muzaffar chieftains were quickly subdued, but his real target was Baghdad. Ahmed, Sultan of Baghdad, knew the strength of the Tatars and fearful of retribution for his misdeeds, fled towards Syria, hotly pursued by

Timur's soldiers. He reached Damascus safely, but lost all of his treasures and his household to the Tatars. Timur established his governor in Baghdad and returned to his homeland. To the Mamluke sultan, he sent a letter, offering peace, security and trade provided he stopped meddling in the affairs of Persia and Baghdad. The Mamluke sultan spurned the offer, slew Timur's ambassador, marched across the Euphrates to Baghdad and reinstalled Sultan Ahmed in the old city of the Abbasid Caliphs.

The gauntlet was now thrown and the die was cast. Conflict between Timur, Lord of the east and the Mamlukes became inevitable. Timur was in no haste because he knew that a westward march might lead to a clash of arms with the powerful Ottomans. He had a masterful grasp of global politics and he moved with the deliberation of a grand strategist. In 1398, he made his move. First he advanced south through the Hindu Kush Mountains and Afghanistan to Kabul. With the dexterity of a master chess player, he wanted to eliminate any threat to his rear as he advanced westward. Timur also needed the funds for his campaigns into Syria. A letter was sent to Sultan Mahmud of Delhi, the last of the fading Tughlaq dynasty, demanding his surrender. Sultan Mahmud was not ready to submit, so the Tatars moved through the Punjab towards Delhi. Unable to face the Tatars in battle, Mahmud fled south to Gujrat. Timur's stay in Delhi was a repeat of his stay in Isfahan twelve years earlier. Under the pretext that some townspeople had attacked his soldiers, Timur ordered a general slaughter. Over 150,000 men, women and children were killed and pyramids of skulls were erected in the bazaars of Delhi. Timur appointed one of his grandsons, Pir Muhammed as his deputy in Hindustan and retreated by way of Meerat and Kashmir, carrying with him the wealth of India and a large number of artisans and architects.

The impact of Timurid massacres on the subcontinent was profound. Many of the great sufis and ulema fled from the advancing Tatars into the

outlying provinces. Of these, Gaysu Daraz, the Shaykh of the Chishtiya order, is noteworthy. He migrated south to Deccan, where he established his zawiyah and worked ceaselessly to propagate Islam. He was the first to write extensively in Dakhni, the southern branch of Urdu. The origin of Urdu poetry dates to this period. Later, Urdu flourished in the north and became a superb medium of expression by the 18th century. In addition to the Deccan, Bengal, Jaunpur, Gujrat and Malwa received a large influx of sufis and scholars. Among these, Shaykh Ahmed and Shaykh Shahabuddin of Jaunpur as well as Shaykh Ali of Mahim (modern Bombay) are noteworthy. It was also during this period that Multan and the Punjab received a fresh influx of Suhrwardi sufis, although the Suhrwardi order had been established in Multan by Bahauddin Zikriya (d. 1262) early in the 13th century.

Politically, the Timurid invasion hastened the disintegration of the subcontinent into regional powers. Gone was the central authority that had been forged by Alauddin Khilji and Malik Kafur (1300 to 1320). Mahmud Tughlaq, who had fled to Gujrat before Timur, returned to reclaim his throne, but his dominions were limited to a few miles around the city. Bengal was already independent and remained so until its conquest by Sher Shah Suri in 1538. Gujrat flourished and with it the city of Ahmedabad became a prime center of culture and art. The golden period of Ahmedabad belongs to this era. To the south, the kingdoms of Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Birar, Bidar and Golkonda (modern Hyderabad) established themselves and attracted a large number of sufis fleeing the Tatar advance. Further south, the prosperous Hindu court of Vijayanagar rose up, displaying a rare ebullience of human energy in this period of global turbulence. To the west, Multan and Sindh asserted their independence. The subcontinent had remained under a central authority for fifty years until the death of Muhammed bin Tughlaq (1351). After Timur, that unity was not to return until the Great Moghuls (1526-1707) arrived on the scene.

Having silenced Delhi and collected a rich booty to finance his campaigns, Timur headed towards Baghdad, Damascus and Ankara for a confrontation with the powerful western powers of Islam.

The Battle of Ankara

From India, Timur turned towards Baghdad. The year was 1400.

Facing him were an array of foes extending in an arc from Iraq through Syria, Turkey and into the Caucasus. He was cognizant of the strength of the Ottoman Turks and initially wished to avoid a confrontation with them. But the westward march of the Tatars was bound to run up against the equally expansive Ottomans. The cause for hostilities was provided by the flight of some of Timur's foes into Ottoman territories where they received the traditional Turkish protection. Timur wrote to the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid asking that the fugitives be expatriated. The response was not only negative; it was insulting. Further correspondence followed, more insults traded, until it was clear that a test of strength between the two giants was inevitable.

Timur could have taken Baghdad as he went, but he always planned his moves with the meticulous care of a great conqueror. First, he focused on clearing his flanks. Moving up to the headwaters of the Tigris and the Euphrates (in modern Turkey) he captured the key city of Sivas. The defending Turkish contingent fled. From there Timur sent detachments towards Georgia and the Caucasus Mountains, eliminating the Georgian and Armenian Crusaders who had menaced his rearguard. Then he turned west and advanced towards Syria. His objective was to neutralize the Mamlukes before undertaking a test of strength with the Ottomans so that his flank would not be threatened from Cairo. Mamluke armies were camped in Aleppo, a heavily defended walled city with high ramparts. The Tatars lured the Mamlukes from their fortified positions. A great battle ensued in which the Mamlukes were soundly trounced and were sent reeling south towards the Sinai. Timur took Aleppo and moved on Damascus. In 1401, Damascus surrendered and the Mamlukes sued for peace. The terms of surrender were negotiated for the Mamlukes by no less a person than the great historian Ibn Khaldun, author of the *Muqaddimah*. Ibn Khaldun was at the time serving the Mamluke sultans of Cairo. Damascus met the same fate as had earlier befallen Isfahan, Delhi and a host of other cities. The city was sacked, set

on fire and was almost obliterated. Timur captured the artisans and architects of the city and sent them to Samarkand to work on his many projects. It is said that it was in Damascus that Timur saw a pomegranate shaped dome that adorned one of the mosques. This dome, further refined, was erected on many a tomb in Samarkand. Two hundred years later through Timur's descendants, the Great Moghuls in India, this same concept found its sublime expression in the dome of the Taj Mahal.



With his flanks cleared, Timur retraced his steps to Baghdad. The Ottomans were still busy in Europe. In 1386, the powerful Sultan Bayazid of the Ottomans had defeated the Serbs at the Battle of Kosova and had forged ahead into Bulgaria (1392) and lands beyond the Danube. So Timur proceeded to lay siege to the city with due deliberation. Sultan Ahmed of Baghdad once again fled and left the city in charge of a lieutenant, Nuruddin who valiantly defended the city. Baghdad, despite the ravages of the Mongols, was still a city to be reckoned with militarily. It was defended on one side by the waters of the Tigris River and on the others by high walls manned by long-range batteries. But Nuruddin could not withstand the onslaught of the Tatars and the city fell. General slaughter followed in the fashion of Timurid conquests. Chroniclers report that twenty-one towers of skulls were erected in the city. The buildings, save the mosques and sufi zawiyahs, were pulled down. This was the final coupe de grace for Baghdad, a city that was once the crown city of the world. After Timur,

Baghdad was to remain a provincial town at best, with the glory of the past inscribed only in the stones that lay scattered around the once mighty monuments.

Timur had subdued the Georgians, forced the Mamlukes to pay him tribute, conquered the great city of Baghdad and was now ready to face the Ottomans. In the ensuing struggle between the two great conquerors, Timur of the Tatars and Bayazid of the Ottomans, one sees a contrast between careful planning on one side and casual overconfidence on the other. Timur made every move with meticulous care, gathering intelligence about the movements of his foe, while carefully concealing his own. Reinforcements were brought in both from Samarqand and Afghanistan. Bayazid, on the other hand, appeared so confident that his usual prudence deserted him. He moved leisurely from the plains of Hungary through the Balkans, crossed the Bosphorus and moved to his camp at Ankara. From there, he advanced towards Sivas with an army of over 100,000, expecting to confront the enemy. But Timur was a consummate soldier. He knew that the Ottoman strength was in its infantry, which was well disciplined, well armed and the most formidable in the world. Eluding the Turks advancing towards him, Timur swung behind the Ottoman armies towards Ankara. Bayazid was well over a hundred miles from Ankara when he heard that the Tatars were headed for his home base. He was forced to turn around to protect his base. But it was too late. Timur had already occupied Ankara and the Ottoman camps. Furthermore, the Tatars diverted the waters of the Ankara River and poisoned the only other supply of water in the area, a fresh water fountain. By the time the Turks arrived at Ankara, they had marched a long distance and were tired, hungry and thirsty. The Turkish Sultan had been checkmated. Denied access to water, Bayazid had to order an assault against the powerful and mobile Tatar cavalry. The battle was lost before it started. The Ottoman infantry, which was until that time invincible in defensive warfare, was no match for the swift cavalry of Timur. Within hours of the start of battle, over 50,000 Turks lay dead on the battlefield. Bayazid fought bravely, but was captured and was brought back to Timur in a cage. There, in the tent of the mighty Tatar conqueror, he had to bear the humiliating indignity of watching his household brought in naked. The heartbroken Bayazid died in captivity three months later. Thus was the end of one of the bravest soldiers among the Turks and undoubtedly one of its most renowned conquerors. Timur advanced to Constantinople, but did not

cross the Straits into Europe. The Ottoman Empire, which was almost annihilated, survived under Sulaiman, the resilient son of Bayazid and went on to become the most powerful empire in the world during the following centuries.

The Battle of Ankara in 1402 provides a benchmark in Islamic history. It was the last of the great battles fought by Timur. He had brought an end to the Tughlaq dynasty in India, destroyed the Golden Horde and set the Russians free, displaced the Muzaffars in Persia, eliminated the Fatimid assassins, razed Baghdad to the ground, humbled the Mamlukes of Egypt and had nearly extinguished the Ottoman Empire. He had destroyed the old world order and a new order was in the making. But the old conqueror was not yet satisfied. His ambition was to conquer the world. Returning to Samarqand, he made preparations for a march on China. Within three months he was on the move again, at the head of 300,000 soldiers, towards Beijing. But death claimed this mighty conqueror at the age of 69, in 1405 and China was spared the ravages suffered by the rest of the known civilized world.

Timur had welded an empire by the force of his will, uniting the warring Tatars into the most feared fighting machine since Genghiz Khan. With his death, this imposed unity fell apart and the far flung provinces of the Timurid Empire asserted their independence one by one, except its core in Central Asia and Persia, which was inherited by the enlightened Shah Rukh, son of Timur.

Aftermath of Tatar Invasions

Timur demonstrated, as no one else in history has, the geopolitical interdependence of the Afro-Eurasian landmass. The vast area from Morocco to China is like an interconnected checkerboard. Events in one area invariably have an impact on other interconnected areas.

Timur was the first conqueror in history to bring the bulk of the Eurasian landmass under a single military and political umbrella. As long as he lived, his word was the law. Those who did not bow to his will paid a tremendous price. But Timur, in the Mongol-Tatar-Turkish traditions, left no firm guidance for his succession. In a broader sense, the absence of consensus among Muslims regarding the rules of succession appears as a recurrent theme in Islamic history, since the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib. Along with the Shi'a-Sunni divide as to whether it is the pre-eminence of lineage from the Prophet or consensus of the community that confers legitimacy of rule, the culture and customs of the peoples entering the fold of Islam have also played their part in this debate. It was the Mongol-Tatar-Turkish tradition that all the children of a ruling monarch had equal access to the crown. The prince who won in this scramble was presumably the one with the most capability. In the process, all contenders to the throne, including the brothers of the winner, were to be eliminated. We see this process exhibit itself in the Ottoman courts up until the 17th century and in the deadly carnage accompanying the ascension of the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb in India in the 17th century.

Timur destroyed the old world order and paved the way for new dynasties to emerge. He eliminated the power of the Golden Horde who had held Russia under their thumb for 200 years and the Dukes of Moscow started on the long march towards political consolidation. In India, Sultan Mahmud Tughlaq, who fled to Gujrat before the advancing armies of Timur, returned to Delhi, but was discredited and the Tughlaq dynasty disappeared. For a brief while, the Sayyids, claiming descent from the Prophet, controlled Delhi. But they could not manage the chaos in the subcontinent

and were soon displaced by the Lodhis (1451-1526) who consolidated their hold on the Punjab and the territories around Delhi.

The unsettled political conditions in India sparked an interest in spiritual movements. Islam grew, carried south and east by the sufis. The celebrated mystic poet Kabir wrote during this period. The Bhakti movement, which started in South India, traveled north and influenced the development of Hindu thought. Ramananda, Ramanuja and Chaitanya (1480-1585), some of the best-known exponents of Bhakti thought, lived in this period. The simultaneous growth of spirituality in Hinduism and Islam brought about syncretic tendencies in the Indian religions. Guru Nanak (1489-1538), the founder of the Sikh religion, preached in the Punjab. These developments, initially propelled by religious quests, had a profound impact on the politics of the subcontinent in subsequent centuries and continue to affect the politics of India and Pakistan today. Of the empires destroyed by Timur, only the Ottomans survived primarily because their European territories were untouched by Tatar devastations.

In northwestern Persia and eastern Anatolia, two powerful Turkish principalities, the Kara Kuyunlu and the Aq Kuyunlu, emerged out of the chaos of the post-Timurid era. Kara Yusuf, a Turkoman chief, captured Tabriz (1410), Armenia, Georgia, Qazvin, Sultaniya, Mosul and Baghdad and founded a powerful Kara Kuyunlu Kingdom stretching from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf. Kara Yusuf and his son Kara Iskandar, successfully withstood repeated forays by the Timurid prince

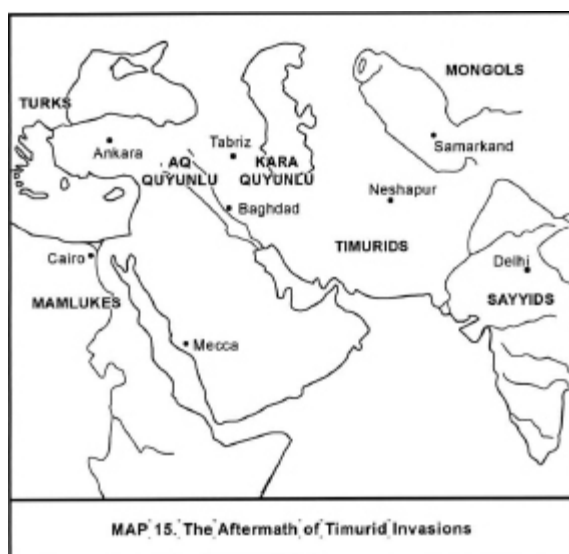
Shah Rukh. After Kara Iskandar, his brother Jehan Shah expanded the boundaries of the Kara Kuyunlu principality to include most of Persia and parts of Afghanistan. Jehan Shah was a patron of literature and art and was himself a writer of some repute. The Kara Kuyunlus were active champions of Ithna Ashari Fiqh and they are usually credited with introducing Shi'a doctrines into Iraq and giving them official patronage (circa 1440).

Further west, the Aq Kuyunlu established themselves around Diyarbakr and Erzurum. The two principalities of Kara Kuyunlu and Aq Kuyunlu often fought each other for border territories. Initially, the Kara Kuyunlu had the upper hand. But in 1467, Jehan Shah suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Uzun Hassan, leader of the Aq Kuyunlu and was slain. The Kara Yusuf princes were hunted from city to city and were either killed or made to flee. Kara Quli, one of the descendants of Jehan Shah fled from

Persia to India in 1478 and founded the Qutubshahi kingdom of Golkunda (modern Hyderabad). The Shi'a leanings of this kingdom, as well as some of the other Bahmani kingdoms of the Deccan, played an important part in the political rivalries between the Great Moghuls of India and the Safavids of Persia in the 17th century and were a major factor in the Moghul invasions of the Deccan during the reigns of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb.

After the defeat of the Kara Kuyunlus, the Kingdom of Aq Kuyunlu prospered. Uzun Hassan, a farsighted monarch, introduced a fiscal legal code, called Qanun namaye Hassan Padishah, into Persia. It was the first time that the peasants and merchants of Persia, eastern Anatolia and Kurdistan experienced an equitable taxation system since the devastations of Genghiz Khan. For this reason alone, Uzun Hassan is ranked as a prominent reformer in the history of Persia. However, on the political front, Muslim writers consider Uzun Hassan a turncoat, because he acted in collusion with the Latin Crusaders against the Ottoman Turks.

Only the core of Timur's empire remained firmly under his heirs. After the initial fray for the spoils of the Empire among the Timurid princes, Shah Rukh emerged the victor. In 1409 he occupied the city of Samarqand but continued to maintain his capital at Herat, where he had spent his youth as Timur's governor. Rebellions continued to fester in the far-flung provinces and Shah Rukh had to mount several



expeditions to contain them. Fars was pacified in 1414, followed by Kirman in 1416. Soon the emirs of Uzbekistan, Shirvan, Garmshehr, Qandahar and Kazakhstan offered their abeyance. By 1420, Shah Rukh was firmly in control not only of the beautiful valley of Farghana but also of Khorasan, Sistan, Kirman, Fars and Khwarazm. Thus the eastern portions of the Timurid Empire remained with Shah Rukh. But the powerful principality of Turkmen Kara Kuyunlu, based around Tabriz, presented a growing threat. Shah Rukh led three successful campaigns against the Kara Kuyunlu, the first one in 1420, the second one in 1431 and the third towards the end of his reign in 1434. Each time, Shah Rukh occupied the city of Tabriz but the Kara Kuyunlu Turks returned soon after the Timurids withdrew. It was the Kuyunlu challenge to the Timurids that sowed the seeds for the rise of the Safavid dynasty towards the end of the century and of the Ottoman-Safavid conflicts that followed.

Shah Rukh is remembered as a benevolent monarch. He brought political and economic stability to much of Timur's Empire, which was on the brink of chaos following his death. In this he was well served by his able ministers. Most prominent among them were Emir Kokultash, the finance minister; Giasuddin Pir Ali who was the General Secretary; and, Jalaluddin who was the Defense Minister. Shah Rukh was a patron of art, literature and science. Calligraphy, miniature painting, poetry, history, music and astronomy flourished. One of the best-known mathematicians and astronomers of the era was Ghiyasuddin Jamshid and among the well-known poets was Shah Niamatullah Wali. Besides the Farsi language that was the lingua franca, eastern Turkish emerged as the language of the people about the same time as the Urdu language first made its appearance in southern India. Schools were well endowed, roads were repaired, hospitals established. In matters of religion, Shah Rukh was orthodox, abandoning the Genghiz doctrines in favor of the Shariah. Trade with China, India and Egypt was encouraged. Agriculture flourished. Besides Herat and Samarqand, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tashkent emerged as centers of culture, poetry, art and literature.

The death of Shah Rukh in 1434 saw further erosion in the power of the house of Timur. The Empire of Shah Rukh broke up into three parts. One was based in Farghana where Shah Rukh's son Ulugh Bey ruled. The

second was based in Khorasan controlled by Abul Qasim. The third was centered in Afghanistan under Alauddawla, another Timurid prince. Central Persia came under the control of Sultan Muhammed. In northwest Persia and eastern Anatolia, the Kara Kuyunlus under Jahan Shah steadily expanded their domains. Ulugh Bey (1434-1449) of Farghana is noted in history for his patronage of science and mathematics. The famous observatory in Samarqand was built during the reign of this sultan and noted mathematicians like Ghiasuddin Jamshid, Moeenuddin Kashani, Kadizada Rumi and Salahuddin Musa did their work there. Ulugh Bey is also credited with the astronomical tables *Zinj e Jadid e Sultani* that were extensively used in the Islamic world during the Middle Ages.

Following Ulugh Bey, Abu Said (1450-1469) tried to maintain his grip over the Timurid Empire but lost western Persia and Anatolia to the Kara Kuyunlus. After his capture and death at the hands of the Kara Kuyunlus in 1469, the Empire went through further disintegration. Military pressure from the Mongols to the north and the Uzbeks to the east increased. Tabriz, northwest Persia and eastern Turkey passed under the control of the Aq Kuyunlus ruled by Uzun Hassan (1478) and his son Yaqub (1478-1490). Sultan Hussain Baiqara (1469-1506), a great-grandson of Timur, controlled Afghanistan and Herat. Prince Ahmed (1469-1494), who was a grandson of Shah Rukh and a great grandson of Timur, ruled the area around Samarqand. Prince Ahmed's brother Omar Shaykh ruled from Farghana. Yunus Khan, a descendant of Genghiz Khan and a general in the armed forces of Abu Said, brought Mongolistan under his control.

Yunus Khan's sister, Qutluq Nigar Khanum was married to Omar Shaykh. The son of this marriage, Zaheeruddin Muhammed Babur, was the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India. Thus Babur was a Mongol from his mother's side and a Tatar and great grandson of Timur from his father's side. For those interested in genealogy, the title of Babur would be Zaheeruddin Muhammed Babur bin Omar Shaykh bin Abu Said bin Muhammed bin Miran Shah bin Timur. Babur's lineage illustrates why it was that the great Moghuls of India considered the recapture of Samarqand so important. It was their ancestral homeland. An Indian army was sent up to Samarqand and Farghana as late as the reign of Moghul emperor Shah Jehan (1628-1658).

Thus it was that the disintegration of the Timurid Empire created the chaos out of which emerged the powerful dynasties of the Safavids, the Ottomans and the Great Moghuls.

ISLAM IN THE ARCHIPELAGO

Summary

Muslim traders introduced Islam into the nations of Indonesia _Z VJ. and Malaysia and into eastern China in the 8th century. Malacca and Canton developed large and prosperous colonies of Muslim traders. However, it was not until the 13th century that a burst of sufi activity diffused the faith into the interior of the Archipelago. Islam spread rapidly in the 14th and 15th centuries through the work of Malay scholars and sufis. The rulers, to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of their subjects, embraced Islam. By the end of the 15th century, the powerful Majapahit kingdom in Java had become Muslim. The northward spread of Islam into the Philippines and Vietnam was arrested by the arrival of the Spanish and their conquest of Manila in 1540. The Muslims resisted forced conversions and the Inquisition that the Spaniards introduced into the islands. Armed resistance followed, which continues to this day on the island of Mindanao.

Islam in Indonesia

Modern Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. Together with Malaysia and the Philippine islands, this area is home to over 250 million Muslims. Historically, the region has been referred to as the East Indies, but we will use the term “archipelago” to include the modern nations of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei and the term “Malay” as a comprehensive term to include the people, language and culture of these three nations.

Geography is a major determinant of history. The vast region extending from the Malayan peninsula to New Guinea is not a part of the interconnecting landmass extending from Morocco to Bengal. Geographic interconnections ensured political military interactions between North Africa, Egypt, West Asia, Central Asia and India. East Asia is separated from this interconnecting landmass by the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Due to its remoteness, the political and military events in East Asia were affected only peripherally by the events in the rest of the Muslim world. As a consequence, Indonesia and Malaysia had to forge their own history, which is related to that of the rest of the Islamic world more in its spiritual, intellectual and religious content and only marginally in its military-political content.

The pre-Islamic Archipelago had a Hindu ruling class over a Buddhist-Hindu-animist matrix. The first infusion of Indian elements into the Archipelago occurred during the reign of Ashoka (269-232 B.C.E.). Ashoka was the first to consolidate his power over much of the Indian subcontinent. His early reign was characterized by a relentless war to expand his dominions. However, after the Battle of Kalinga (circa 250 B.C.E.), he was so moved by the slaughter and destruction of the war, that he embraced Buddhism. His capital of Pataliputra (modern Patna) became a principal Buddhist center. Ashoka's edicts of nonviolence, reflecting the teachings of Buddha, were carved into stone and were sent to Sri Lanka, Burma, Afghanistan and the Indonesian Islands.

The imperial court of Ashoka maintained diplomatic relations with the Assyrian courts of Persia and Syria, the pharaohs of Egypt, Alexander I of Macedonia and the Tang Dynasty of China. India was also a major player in the trade linking China, India and the Mediterranean. It stands to reason that the emissaries of the emperor would have carried his message to these far-flung corners of the known world. However, Buddhism was slow to expand its influence in the Archipelago and in China, reflecting in part the difficult communications of the age and in part the passive, non-violent approach of Buddhism. It was not until the third and fourth centuries that Buddhism spread rapidly in China, Japan and the Archipelago.

In the fourth century, northern India was consolidated under the Gupta Empire (320-467). Emperor Chandra Gupta II (375-415) extended his kingdom through conquest, marriage and diplomacy over much of the Indian subcontinent. We know a good deal about this period through the writings of the Chinese traveler Fa-Hsien. During this period, Hinduism went through a period of resurgence in India, displacing Buddhism as the dominant religion of India. The well-known poet Kalidasa lived at the court of Chandra Gupta. The patronage of the royal court encouraged Hindu ideas to travel far and wide.

However, it was southern India that was the primary vehicle for the transmission of Hinduism to the Archipelago. Geography as well as politics favored the south. The monsoons connected the sea-lanes of Sri Lanka and the Tamil lands to the Archipelago. Commerce stimulated cultural and religious interactions. Buddhism was the international faith in Asia but Hinduism found favor in the courts of Sumatra, Cambodia and Vietnam. No doubt the commercial advantages of maintaining a common religious bond played an important role. Southern India and Sri Lanka exported cotton, ivory, elephants, brass work and iron to the Archipelago and China. In turn, the Archipelago exported camphor and spices. China exported silk, oil and amber. The products of India and East Asia were exported from the western coast of India to the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean. Dialects of south Indian languages as well as Sanskrit were introduced into the Archipelago and into Indochina.

The south Indian influence grew with time. In the 6th and 7th centuries, the Pallava and Chola kingdoms controlled much of what is today Tamil Nadu, in southeastern India. Both of these kingdoms were predatory and

lived off raiding their neighbors. The Cholas, in particular, built a powerful navy and raided as far as the Indonesian islands. In 1025, the Chola navy defeated the navy of the Empire of Sri Vijaya based in Sumatra and became the most powerful naval force in the Bay of Bengal during the first half of the 11th century. Together with the Keralites of Malabar and the Pallavas of the southern tip of India, the Chola-Pallava regions provided an important link in the trade between the Roman Empire, India and China. The south Indian kingdoms continued to prosper under successive dynasties until the arrival of Malik Kafur (circa 1300), general of Alauddin Khilji's armies in the Deccan, in southern India. In the thousand years of pre-Islamic interactions with the Archipelago, the temples of Angkorwat in Cambodia were built (circa 1000) and the Hindu kingdoms of Sri Vijaya in Sumatra and Majapahit in Java rose and fell, leaving a strong Sanskritic influence on the language, customs, art and architecture of the Archipelago and Indochina.

The introduction of Islam into the Archipelago may be divided into three phases: (1) the first phase extending from the Hijra (622) to 1100 (2) the second phase covering the period 1100 to 1500 and (3) the third phase extending from 1500 to modern times.

The first phase was a product of commercial contacts between the maritime regions of the Indian Ocean. Trade between West Asia and East Asia predates the Islamic period. Merchants from Yemen and the Persian Gulf followed the monsoons to the coast of Malabar and from there to the islands of Sri Lanka, Java and Sumatra. This trade mushroomed with the onset of Islam. The powerful Abbasids in Baghdad especially encouraged global trade. To the west, trade caravans traversed the Sahara through West Africa deep into what is today Ghana and Nigeria. To the east, the Silk Road to China was brisk with activity. Sea borne trade was not far behind. Muslim merchants, both Arab and Persian, plied the Indian Ocean and captured the bulk of the trade with India, East Africa, Indonesia and China. Colonies of merchants grew up in Gujrat, Malabar, Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Canton and all along the East African coast. Al Masudi records that in 877, during the reign of the Tang emperor Hi-Tsung, there was a colony of almost 200,000 Muslims in Canton, China. A peasant rebellion in 887 forced these Muslims to flee and settle at Kheda on the west coast of

Malaya. The merchant colonies along the rim of the Indian Ocean grew in size and prosperity between the years 750 and 1100.

Impressed by the honesty and integrity of these merchants, a large number of Malays accepted Islam. Intermarriage also played a part in conversions, as happened in Malabar and Sumatra. The immigrants did not force their own customs and culture on the local populations. Instead, they adopted the local culture while introducing the doctrine of Tawhid and the requirements of the Shariah. The Arabs were always a small minority among the Malays but they enjoyed a privileged position in society. They spoke the language of the Qur'an and had a reputation for piety and steadfastness. They were sought after as ideal spouses. Even the rajas and the sultans considered it an honor to have an Arab marry within the family and those with Arab blood were honored as Sayyids, descendants of the Prophet's family.

This period marked the zenith of classical Islamic civilization. It was during the 8th and 9th centuries that the major schools of Fiqh evolved in Madina and Kufa. The Islam that was carried by the Arab and Persian merchants had a heavy content of Shariah and Fiqh. Early Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia reflected the intellectual currents in West Asia, although the region was outside the political military circle of the Abbasid Empire. The institution of the hajj played an important part in these developments. Most of the Arabs followed the Shafi'i and Maliki Schools that were the dominant schools in Madina and Damascus. Consequently, these were the schools of Fiqh brought back by the hajjis into Indonesia and Malaysia.

Circa 1100, the Islamic world went through a profound transformation. Al Gazzali (d. 1111), through the force and eloquence of his writings, dealt a severe blow to the study of philosophy and gave tasawwuf a respectable place in Islamic learning. Before 1100, Islamic civilization was extrovert and empirical, with a heavy emphasis on Shariah and Fiqh. After 1100, Islamic civilization turned inwards, focused more on the spirit than on philosophy and the physical sciences. Tasawwuf emerged as the dominant force in Islamic teachings. Major sufi orders, which were to change the spiritual landscape of Asia and Africa, sprang up in Baghdad (Abdul Qader Jeelani, d. 1166), Delhi (Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti, d. 1236), Konya, Turkey (Jalaluddin Rumi, d. 1273) and Cairo (al Shadhuli, d. 1258). The

content as well as the thrust of Islamic civilization changed. The Archipelago, like India, felt the impact of this transformation.

It was during the period 1100 to 1500 that Islam spread widely in Indonesia and Malaya. It was a spiritual Islam, focused more on the soul than on ritual, that found a home in the islands much as was the case in India. The spread of Islam in the Archipelago followed a geographical progression over a period of 400 years (1100 to 1500) starting with Sumatra, followed by Java, Malaya, Borneo, Sulu (Mindanao), Sulawesi and Luzon (Manila). Shaykh Abdullah Arif, a scholar from Arabia, introduced Islam into Sumatra around the year 1100. One of his disciples, Shaykh Burhan Shah, carried on dawah work throughout northern Sumatra. The first ruler of northern Sumatra to accept Islam was Johan Shah (1204), but it was during the reign of Sultan Malik al Saleh (d. 1297) that Islam received a major boost. Commercial contacts had introduced the faith to the coasts of Sumatra and Java as well as the western coast of Malaya and the eastern shores of Vietnam in the previous centuries. Sufi orders appeared and spread the faith throughout Sumatra during the 14th century. The city of Pasai became a center of learning. Ibn Batuta visited Pasai in 1345 and found its ruler, Sultan Malik al Zahir to be a pious man, a patron of scholars and an enthusiastic propagator of the faith. Malik al Zahir was a grandson of Malik al Saleh. In 1396, Parameswara, a prince from the island of Java, fled to Malacca. He married a daughter of the Sultan of Pasai, accepted Islam and changed his name to Sultan Iskander Shah (1406). It was this prince who introduced Islam into Malaya.

Pasai and Malacca became centers of tasawwuf, radiating their spiritual teachings to the interior areas. Malacca became the beacon of Islam for the region. The important commercial center of Kedah became Muslim by 1474. During this period—the 13th and 14th centuries—the Muslim world was reeling from Mongol and Tatar invasions. Many of the ulema, sufi shaykhs and merchants fleeing this destruction found refuge in Delhi. As persecution of the sufis increased at the court of Muhammed bin Tughlaq of Delhi (circa 1335), many of them migrated further east to the Archipelago. Tasawwuf had become so widespread in the Islamic world that many of the merchants and travelers themselves belonged to sufi tareeqas. These migrations further stimulated religious scholarship in the islands and provided an impetus for the rise of great sufi shaykhs among the Malays

themselves. It was these shaykhs, sons of the soil, who spearheaded the propagation of the Islamic faith in their homeland.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, Java was the seat of the powerful Hindu kingdom of Majapahit, centered on the modern city of Jakarta. Agriculture and the spice trade were the mainstays of this kingdom. Majapahit dominated the island of Java and its commerce. Lesser rajas and local chiefs who controlled local ports paid tribute to the ruler of Majapahit. As commerce between the Archipelago and the Muslim world increased, many of these local rajas and chiefs found it more advantageous to forge closer ties with Muslim India and West Asia than with the Majapahit court. As political ties with the central political power weakened, a local power vacuum was created. Islam was the beneficiary of this political vacuum. One by one, the local rajas and chiefs accepted Islam. Conversion brought with it a sense of belonging to a larger international brotherhood as well as significant advantages in commerce and trade. In due time, the Majapahit court itself came under Islamic influence. By 1450, Islam was the dominant religion at the court.

In 1451, Shaykh Rahmat, a sage who had made his center near the modern city of Surabaya, converted the Majapahit ruler, Raja

Kertawijaya, to Islam. By 1475, Majapahit had changed its character to a Muslim sultanate, although the kingdom itself survived until 1515. Thus the spread of Islam in Java was different from what is a norm in history, wherein the conversion of a powerful ruler forces the subjects to follow suit. In the islands, it was the people who converted first, with the king following suit. Among the sufi shaykhs most revered by Javanese in this transformation were Shaykh Ishaq of Pasai, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Giri, Sunan Dirijat and Khalifa Hussain.

Yet another element in the introduction of Islam was the issue of legitimacy of rule. Throughout history, there has been a strong current of opinion among Muslims that a ruler must be from the family of the Prophet. By the 14th century, when Islam had spread throughout Java and Sumatra, this belief in the legitimacy of rule by kinship with the Prophet was widely accepted by the Malay people. Consequently, the newly converted rulers sought marriage ties with the Sayyids and Sheriffs, who were Arab immigrants from Mecca and Madina. The progeny of these marriages could rightfully claim their lineage both from the ruling dynasties of the islands

and the family of the Prophet. The kingdom of Majapahit was no exception to this longing for legitimacy. As more and more Javanese accepted Islam, the rulers of Majapahit had to bow to the will of the people, accept Islam and fulfill the requirements of legitimacy as accepted by the general population.

Shaykh Awliya Karim al Maqsum, who moved from Malacca to Mindanao in 1380, introduced Islam into the southern Philippines. His disciple Syed Abu Bakr carried on his work. In 1475, Sharif Muhammed Kabungsuhan, moved from Malacca to Mindanao, where he worked tirelessly to introduce the faith. Further north, in the areas around the modern city of Manila, sufi shaykhs carried on dawah (invitation to the faith) work. The Spanish forcibly converted these areas to Christianity when they conquered the Philippines (1564). The southern region of Sumatra was Islamized in the latter part of the 15th century. The islands of the Celebes and the western regions of New Guinea also embraced Islam around 1495 through the work of Shaykh Putah.

Islam spread like a beacon, carried from island to island, for almost four hundred years. Each time the inhabitants of an island accepted Islam, they themselves became the standard bearers of the new faith and worked hard to convert others. By the time the Portuguese and the Spanish arrived on the scene in the 16th century (1512 onwards), the entire Archipelago was either under the sway of Islam or on its way to becoming Muslim.

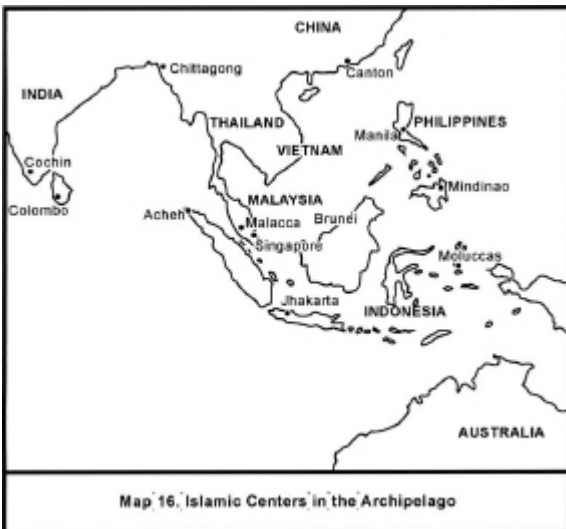
Islam is not just a dogma and a collection of rituals. It is a total worldview that embraces the intellect as well as the spirit. It is a paradigm shift that transforms individuals, societies and civilizations, reshaping their horizons and remolding them in a global framework.

The introduction of tasawwuf into the Archipelago sparked intense intellectual activity among the Malays, much as it had done earlier in Central Asia, Persia, India, Egypt and North Africa. Debates and discussions on the spiritual aspects of tasawwuf produced some of the most sublime literature in the Malay language. Shaykh Hamza al Fansuri, who lived in Aceh (northern Sumatra) during the reign of Riyat Shah (1589-1604), is the best known of the sufi poets of the era. The Malays were as intensely involved with discussions about Wahdat al Wajud (Unity of Existence) as was the rest of the Islamic world at that time. The greatest

exponent of this school of tasawwuf in the Malay language was Nuruddin al Raniri (d. 1666) of the Qadariya order.

It was about this time that the Qur'an was translated into the Malay language by Shaykh Abdul Rauf al Sinkili (d. 1693) of the Shattaria order. It is also noteworthy that Aceh (northern Sumatra) produced a succession of four Muslim queens (1641-1699) starting with Sultana Tajul Alam Safiyyatuddin Shah (1641-1675). These women monarchs ruled with distinction over most of the islands of Sumatra and parts of Java and brought pride and honor to the womanhood of Islam.

During the second phase of Islamic penetration, immigration from India to the Archipelago increased. These migrations were helped by the growth of trade in the Indian Ocean and the pivoted role of Malabar, Gujrat and Bengal in this trade. Muslim Indians joined the ranks of the Arabs and Persians as merchants in East Asia. When Malik Kafur, a general of Emperor Alauddin Khilji of Delhi, captured southern India (1300-1320), Islam was introduced into the Deccan Plateau of India.



Thereafter, many of the migrants from India to Malaya and Indonesia were Tamilian Muslims. After 1335, thanks to the vagaries of Emperor Muhammed bin Tughlaq, India split up into regional powers. Among the more powerful were the kingdoms of Gujrat (1335-1565), Bengal (1340-

1575) and the Deccan Sultanates (1336-1650). Merchants, sufi shaykhs and ulema from Gujrat, Bengal, the Makran coast of Baluchistan and the Deccan made up the ranks of immigrants to the Archipelago. In the 19th and the 20th centuries, when Great Britain controlled both India and Malaya, more Indians traveled to Malaya as soldiers and policemen. Despite these migrations, the Indian Muslims remained a small minority in both Malaya and Indonesia although many Muslim Indo-Pakistanis intermarried with the Malays and became a part of the Islamic amalgam.

In the third phase—1500 to 1950—the consolidation of Islam that had started in the second phase continued. Major strides were made not just in the conversion of people, but also in the evolution of culture and literature. The influence of Islam on the Malay language was profound. In India and Pakistan, the cultural impact of the Turks had resulted in the birth of a new language, Urdu. In Indonesia and Malaysia, the religious impact of the sufis and the ulema transformed the Malay language. New alphabets were introduced into the Malay language to facilitate the pronunciation of the Qur'an. Arabic and Farsi words enriched the language, expanding its reach to include philosophy, theology, polemics, exposition and the rational sciences, which facilitated the integration of the Malay peoples into the international brotherhood of Islam. The transcendence of Tawhid replaced the old worldview based on man-made deities. Language itself went through a transformation to accommodate the concepts of Being and the universal community of man. By the 16th century, the Malay language had become the common medium of expression of all the Malay peoples in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, displacing the ancient Javanese language. It also became the medium for the propagation of the new faith throughout the islands.

The third phase is also marked by the appearance of the Europeans. The Portuguese arrived first, capturing by force of arms the commercially important straits of Malacca in 1512. The fall of Malacca forced the migration of local scholars to the other islands, in turn facilitating the further spread of Islam. The experience of the Archipelago with regard to its initial contacts with the Europeans was the same as that of all the other littoral states in the Indian Ocean. Once the Portuguese had circumnavigated the coast of Africa and had established themselves in Goa (India), they embarked on a systematic campaign to destroy the important

trading centers of East Africa, the Persian Gulf, western India and the Archipelago. However, it was soon obvious that Portugal had neither the manpower nor the resources to dominate the Indian Ocean. The powerful Ottoman Turks, who had by now assumed the Caliphate and were duty-bound to assist the Muslims around the globe, resisted the Portuguese aggression. Turkish naval forces engaged the Portuguese navy off the shores of East Africa and contained the advance of Portuguese power. After 1550, a balance of power prevailed between

Portugal and the land powers of Asia. The spirit of resistance to the European Christian invasions provided further impetus and drive to the spread of Islam in the Archipelago.

The next on the scene were the Spanish who were just as ruthless as the Portuguese and were far more powerful. After expelling the Jews and the Muslims from Spain (1492-1502) and destroying the ancient civilizations of the Aztecs, the Mayans and the Incas in the Americas (1500 to 1530), the Spanish made their appearance in East Asia. Magellan arrived in 1521, just about the time that the Sultan of Manila had accepted Islam and the new faith was establishing roots in the northern islands. In 1564, the Philippines fell to the Spanish who promptly introduced the Inquisition into the Archipelago and started a process of forced conversion. The resistance of the Muslims, however, successfully contained the Spanish advance to the northern Luzon islands.

The Portuguese and Spanish invasions halted the northward spread of Islam and arrested its advance into Vietnam and Indochina. A long and protracted military struggle ensued, between the invading Spanish and the defending Malay peoples, a struggle that goes on to this day in the island of Mindanao. By the 16th century, a military stalemate developed in which the island of Mindanao became the boundary between the Spanish possessions in the north and the Muslim Malay territories to the south.

In the 17th century, the Dutch displaced the Portuguese as the principal colonial power in the Far East. The British, after consolidating their position in India (1757-1806), proceeded to occupy the Straits of Malacca (1812). In the latter part of the 19th century, the states of the Archipelago fell one after the other to the Dutch and the British. In the ensuing struggle for independence, the Malay language provided a common bond for the peoples of Indonesia and Malaysia and Islam was a primary vehicle for an

expression of their demand for freedom. The struggle itself provided an impetus to the consolidation of Islamic influence. The faith of Islam spread and by the turn of the 20th century, the entire Archipelago had become Muslim except for the island of Bali and the isolated pocket of Singapore.

Another important aspect of the third phase is the migration of the Chinese to the archipelago. Of the two pre-Islamic civilizations in Asia, those of China and India, China had by far the most political military-technological influence on East Asia. But India had the greater religious-cultural influence. China radiated its power all across the ancient world. Chinese ambassadors were received with honor in Delhi, Samarqand, Yemen and Cairo. In 1406, the great Chinese Admiral Zheng Yi sailed the waters of the Indian Ocean with a mighty fleet as far as the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, visiting along the way, the Sultanate of Java, Sri Lanka, Malabar, Yemen and Dar-as-Salaam in Zanzibar. The rajas and sultans of southeast Asia always saw fit to court the Chinese for trade and protection. The mass migration of Chinese to the archipelago was of more recent times. During the 19th century, many Chinese were brought over to work in the plantations of Malaya and Indonesia. Many stayed. By the end of the 19th century, the Chinese formed a third of the population of Malaya and a small but influential minority of the population of Indonesia. The area in and around the modern city of Singapore had a Chinese majority and that city continues to be dominated by the Chinese today. Most of the Chinese immigrants were not Muslim and it prevented them from melting into the Malayan society. Only in the interior regions of Malaysia and Indonesia were there some conversions when the Chinese occasionally married into Muslim families.

It is pertinent to ask why Islam found widespread acceptance in a Hindu-Buddhist matrix in Indonesia and Malaysia, whereas in India it found only partial acceptance. Several reasons may be advanced to explain these differences. First, the process of introduction of Islam was different in India and the Archipelago. During the first phase of Islamic expansion, between 622 and 1100, the commercial contacts between West Asia and the coastlines of India and Indonesia were similar. Islam made a peaceful penetration into southwestern India and the Archipelago. This changed with the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazna (circa 1000) into India. The dagger of Mahmud thrust deep into India and left a legacy of bitterness, which lasts to

this day. Later invasions from Afghanistan and Central Asia, in search of loot from Hindustan, solidified this bitterness. In India, the ruling dynasties were primarily Turkish, Afghan and Moghul who looked outside the subcontinent for their roots. Except for a brief interlude in the reign of Alauddin Khilji (circa 1300), Indian Muslims and Hindus did not make inroads into the Delhi courts until later in the Moghul period (16th century). Not so in Indonesia. There, the Hindu and Buddhist rulers themselves accepted Islam and in turn became champions of the new faith. They were Malays, not Turks and Moghuls. The affinity of a people to their ruler acts as a powerful catalyst for the penetration of new ideas. Islam became a native religion in the islands from day one; it took Islam 300 years to do so in India. In the subcontinent, the faith spread through the great sufi shaykhs in spite of the opposition of the rulers, and sometimes the opposition of official kadis. The rulers were more interested in collecting taxes than in introducing Islam while the kadis were busy giving fatwas.

The second important difference was language. In India, Farsi was the court language, as it was at the Safavid and Central Asian courts. Urdu and Hindi were native languages but did not find acceptance as court languages. In the Archipelago, Malay remained the official language undergoing a transformation through the influence of Arabic and Persian, but remaining essentially a language of the islands.

The third reason was the depth of penetration of Hindu and Buddhist cultures. In India, Hinduism had displaced Buddhism and had consolidated its hold through the work of Shankaracharya (7th century). The caste system was rigid and almost impenetrable. Not so in Indonesia and Indochina. There, Hinduism was a court veneer imposed from the top. Most of the population had remained animist. The caste system had not filtered down to the common folk. The religious milieu in these regions was closer to that in West Africa than India. It was easier for a universal faith like Islam to change the worldview of a people who were innately spiritual and open (as in the Archipelago) than a people who were spiritual but were insulated in the rigid compartments of a hierarchical caste structure (as in India).

Finally, the partial conversion of the subcontinent added another element of tension in a diverse land already divided by region, language, culture and caste. These tensions burst forth as political-military rivalries in the 18 th

century just as soon as the central Muslim power in Delhi waned and then disappeared. The Europeans fully exploited these tensions to their advantage. In the Archipelago, the acceptance of Islam was almost complete. The Malay peoples of Indonesia and Malaysia found in the new faith a source of national cohesiveness and universal solidarity.

The Conversion of Sultan Iskander Shah

Sandwiched between the island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, the Strait of Malacca is the artery for commerce between China, Japan, India, Arabia and East Africa. In the Middle Ages, these Straits were the hub for trade and commerce just as much as they are today. Riding on the monsoons, ships from as far away as Canton, China visited Malacca from January to May. From July onwards, the monsoons reversed the flow of winds, facilitating the return of ships to India and Sri Lanka. The monsoon patterns in the Arabian Sea similarly allowed ships from Aden and East Africa to trade with Gujrat and the Malabar Coast of India.

The interior of the Malay Peninsula is endowed with bountiful resources. Lush forests, coconut groves, a rich soil, an abundant supply of rain and a population endowed with perseverance, hard work and hospitality make this land an idyllic tropical resort. Through the ages, ships have used the coast of this peninsula to dock and transact business. If one were to visit this area around the year 1400, one would find Chinese, Indians, Omanis, Yemenis, Persians and Africans intermingling with traders from Sumatra, Java, Bali and Canton, exchanging goods and establishing trade relations. China exported silk, brocades, porcelain and perfumes. India offered hardwoods, carvings, precious stones, cotton, sugar, livestock and weapons. From the interior of Malaya came tin, camphor, ebony and gold. Sumatra provided rice, gold, black pepper and mace. Java was the source of dyes, spices and perfumes. Cloves were exported from the Malaccas and sandalwood came from Timor.

Muslim merchants dominated international trade in the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the East China Sea. A common religion, impeccable business integrity and universal transaction laws based on the Shariah had enabled the Muslims to establish a trade network linking the coastlines of East Africa, southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf and the Malabar coast with the islands of Indonesia and the southern coast of China. As early as the 8th

century, there was a Muslim trading post in Canton. The coastline of Malaya was cosmopolitan wherein merchants from Malabar, Arabia and Africa lived and interacted with the indigenous Malay population and Chinese mandarins.

It was into this universe that providence injected a prince. Around the year 1390, a prince from Java, Parameswara, was forced to flee his homeland. Landing on the west coast of Malaya with a loyal following of about a thousand young men, the prince lived off piracy for almost ten years. At that time, Siam (modern Thailand) was the imperial power in the area. Parameswara drove out the Siamese and established the town of Malacca in 1403. The name Malacca derives from the Arabic word Malakut-meaning market place. The Arabs had maintained a trading colony there since the 8th century.

Once settled, the prince encouraged peaceful trade. The fame and fortune of the trading post grew until it attracted international attention. The Muslims dominated the trade in the Indian Ocean. Arabic had become the lingua franca of traders in this region. Islam was gaining a following in the islands of Indonesia. Across the Straits from Malacca, the powerful Muslim kingdom of Aceh was emerging. Local folklore has it that around the year 1405, Prince Parameswara fell in love with a princess from the court of Pasai, accepted Islam, married her and changed his name to Sultan Iskander Shah.

Thus it was love that brought Islam to Malaya. The bride brought with her good fortune for Malacca. The following year, the Emperor of China, Chu Tin (1403-24) sent a delegation under admiral Yin Ching, offering trade and friendship. The offer was gladly accepted as the Sultan was under increasing military pressure from the Siamese to the north. More courtly transactions followed. In 1409, the great Chinese admiral Zheng Yi (commonly known as Admiral Ho) visited Malacca at the head of a large flotilla of great ships. Admiral Zheng Yi was the greatest seaman of the 15th century. He was a Muslim. The Emperor of China, realizing the importance of Islam in the Indian Ocean region, had appointed him as Admiral of the great voyage. Zheng Yi continued with his flotilla to Aceh, Sri Lanka, Calicut, Bijapur, Hormuz, Aden, Jeddah, Zanj (East Africa), Zanzibar, Shofala and then southwards, crossing what is today the Cape of Good

Hope to the west coast of Africa. Admiral Zheng Yi brought an invitation for Sultan Iskander Shah to visit Peking.

In 1411 Sultan Iskander Shah visited China, was warmly received and was given presents of silk, gems, horses, gold and silver. Malacca also received a “most favored nation status” from China and entered into mutual defense agreements to ward off further Thai encroachments into the Malay Peninsula. Upon his return, Sultan Iskander Shah ruled as a benevolent monarch. He invited Muslim scholars from as far away as Mecca, honored them and encouraged the spread of Islam. Malacca became not only the hub of international trade but also a center for Islamic learning and a rich prize that was to be fought over in succeeding centuries by emerging European Empires.

Sultan Iskander Shah died in 1424. His grave is not to be found because the Portuguese, when they captured Malacca in 1510, dug up the graves of all of the Sultans of Malaya and destroyed the tombstones. But the legacy of Sultan Iskander Shah lives. He was a prince who brought Islam to Malaya for the love of a beautiful princess.

CHRONOLOGY

Year Event

570 Birth of Prophet Muhammed at Mecca.

610 Revelation of the first verses of the Qur'an.

Abu Bakr as Siddiq and Ali ibn Abu Talib accept Islam.

615 Conversion of Omar ibn al Khattab.

620 A group of Muslims migrates to Abyssinia to escape the persecution in Mecca.

622 Prophet Muhammed migrates to Madina.

Start of the Islamic calendar.

624 Battle of Badr.

625 Battle of Uhud.

626 Battle of Khandaq (Battle of the Trench).

627 Prophet Muhammed concludes the Treaty of Hudaibiya with the Meccans.

628 The Muslims reclaim Mecca.

The Prophet sends messages to Khosroe of Persia, Heraclius of Byzantium, Muqawqis of Egypt and the king of Yemen, inviting them to accept Islam.

632 Farewell pilgrimage of Prophet Muhammed.

Revelation of the last verse of the Qur'an.

Defensive expedition to Tabuk against the Byzantines ends in a stalemate and commander Zaid bin Harris is killed in action.

Prophet Muhammed passes away.

The Companions establish the Caliphate to affirm the historical continuity of Islam.

Abu Bakr as Siddiq is elected the first Caliph.

Death of Fatimat az Zahra, beloved daughter of the Prophet, wife of Ali ibn Abu Talib.

633 Abu Bakr conducts campaigns against eastern Arabs to ensure their compliance with zakat.

Rise of the false prophets.

Battle of Yamama against Musailimah al Kazzab.

Abu Bakr authorizes the preparation of a written copy of the Qur'an, the Mashaf e Siddiqi.

634 Muslim armies defeat the Byzantines at the Battle of Ajnadyne. Abu Bakr passes away.

Omar ibn al Khattab is elected the Caliph.

635 Campaigns against eastern Roman and Persian Empires. The Muslims capture Damascus.

636 The Persian army is defeated at the Battle of Qadasia. The Byzantines are defeated at the Battle of Yarmuk.

Jerusalem conquered by Muslim armies. Freedom of worship is guaranteed to Christians.

637 The Muslims capture Madayen, capital of the Persian Empire.

640 Omar bin al As begins campaigns in Egypt.

641 Arab armies advance towards Khorasan, Afghanistan and Sindh.

642 The conquest of Egypt is completed.

Caliph Omar streamlines the administration of the vast empire. Judicial rulings of Omar ibn al Khattab and Ali ibn Abu Talib provide a basis for the sciences of Fiqh. Persian armies defeated at the Battle of Nahawand.

643 First construction of the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

644 Caliph Omar ibn al Khattab is assassinated. Uthman bin Affan is elected the Caliph.

649 Cyprus captured from the Byzantines.

650 Pronunciation of Qur'anic verses standardized.

652 Death of Abu Dhar al Ghifari, venerated Companion and sufi.

656 Caliph Uthman bin Affan is assassinated. Ali ibn Abu Talib is elected the Caliph. Beginning of the Civil Wars.

Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib defeats dissidents under Aisha binte Abu Bakr at the Battle of the Camel.

657 Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan, governor of Syria, refuses to recognize the Caliphate of Ali.

Battle of Siffin between forces of Ali and Muawiya. Beginning of the Kharijite schism.

658 Ali ibn Abu Talib defeats the Kharijites at the Battle of Nahrawan.

Muawiya is declared the Caliph by his supporters in Damascus.

659 Truce between Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib and Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan.

661 Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib is assassinated. Age of Khulfa e Rashidoon ends. Muawiya claims the Caliphate. Beginning of the Umayyad dynasty. Hassan ibn Ali retires from politics.

665 Muawiya orders the buildup of a navy.

667 Muslim armies capture Khorasan.

669 Death of Imam Hassan ibn Ali.

670 Uqba bin Nafi begins the conquest of North Africa. The city of Kairoun in North Africa is founded.

671 Muslim armies capture the island of Rhodes. The first attempt to capture Constantinople fails.

678 Death of Aisha binte Abu Bakr, wife of Prophet Muhammed and the source of a large number of Hadith.

680 Death of Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan. Yazid, son of Muawiya, becomes Omayyad ruler. The tragedy of Karbala. Hussain ibn Ali, grandson of the Prophet, is martyred. Beginning of Yawm e Ashoora.

683 Yazid sacks Madina.

Uqba bin Nafi conquers North Africa. Death of Yazid. Muawiya II succeeds him.

684 Marwan I becomes the Caliph.

685 Abdul Malik becomes the Caliph. Construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Muslim armies advance into Central Asia.

690 Omayyad armies reach the Atlantic Ocean.

691 Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is completed.

692 Abdul Malik mints the first coins of the Islamic state.

693 Al Hajjaj, also known as al Hajjaj the cruel, becomes governor of Iraq.

694 Construction of the Omayyad Mosque in Damascus.

699 Death of Al Juhani, rationalist, philosopher.

705 Al Walid I becomes the Caliph and begins a vigorous expansion of the empire.

711 Tariq ibn Ziyad lands in Spain. Visigoth army under Rodriguez is defeated at the Battle of Buhayrah.

Muhammed bin Qasim lands at Debal, subdues Baluchistan, Sindh, Multan and southern Punjab.

712 Musa ibn Nusair advances into Leon, Astoria and Galicia.

Beginning of 780 years of Muslim rule in Andalus.

Jewish golden age in Spain.

Death of Imam Zainul Abedin.

713 Zaid bin Zain ul Abedin organizes resistance to the Omayyads. Beginning of the Zaidi branch.

Muslim armies capture Lyons in France.

714 Muhammed bin Qasim recalled from Sindh by Hajjaj bin Yusuf and imprisoned until death.

Muslims capture Normandy in France.

715 Sulaiman becomes Umayyad Caliph.

Musa ibn Nusair recalled from Spain by Caliph Sulaiman, stripped of all power and banished into the desert.

717 Omar bin Abdul Aziz becomes the Caliph and attempts reconciliation in the Islamic community. He lowers taxes on peasants in Persia and Egypt.

The Byzantines repulse a second Muslim attempt to capture Constantinople.

Spread of Islam into Persia and Egypt picks up momentum.

Omar bin Abdul Aziz is poisoned.

Yazid II becomes the Caliph.

Muslim armies cross the Pyrenees and occupy southern France.

724 Hisham becomes the Caliph.

728 Death of Hasan al Basri, well known sufi Shaykh.

731 Death of Imam al Baqir.

732 Charles Martel stops the Muslim advance into Europe at the Battle of Tours.

735 Muslim armies advance through southern France and occupy mountain passes in Switzerland.

740 Death of Imam Zaid bin Zain ul Abedin.

743 Al Walid II becomes the Caliph.

744 Abu Muslim is appointed the chief dayee of Khorasan.

Yazid III, Ibrahim and Marwan II become the Caliphs in rapid succession.

745 Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq discusses Fiqh issues in his study circles. Imam Abu Haneefa participates in these studies and benefits from them.

746 Beginning of the Abbasid revolution in Khorasan.

747 Kufa falls to the Abbasids. Abu Muslim nominates Abul Abbas as the first Abbasid Caliph.

750 The Abbasid Revolution.

The Abbasid forces defeat the Caliph Marwan at the Battle of Kushaf. The Umayyads are swept away from power and are slaughtered.

Abdur Rahman I escapes to Spain.

Beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Abu Abbas al Saffah becomes the first Abbasid Caliph.

751 Battle of Tlas. The Muslim armies are victorious over the forces of the Tang Empire. China cedes Central Asia to the Caliphate

Systematic development of Fiqh begins.

754 Al Mansur becomes the Caliph, sends troops into China in response to a request for help from the Tang Emperor Tsung.

755 The Umayyad Abdur Rahman I establishes the Umayyad Emirate in Cordoba, Spain.

759 The Franks recapture Narbonne from the Muslims.

760 Death of Imam Ismail, son of Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq.

Beginning of the Fatimid branch among Muslims.

763 Baghdad becomes the seat of the Caliphate and the cradle of Islamic civilization.

765 Death of Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq, one of the principal sources of Fiqh. Caliph al Mansur establishes schools of translation in Baghdad.

Muslims come into contact with Greek philosophy and Indian mathematics.

768 Death of Imam Abu Haneefa, after whom the Hanafi school of Fiqh is named.

Charlemagne (768-814) ascends the Frankish throne.

775 Al Mahdi becomes the Caliph.

778 Charlemagne of France raids Muslim Spain.

780 Charlemagne invades German territories and converts the Germans to Christianity.

781 Ibn Jabir invents the science of chemistry.

785 Al Hadi becomes the Caliph.

786 Harun al Rashid becomes the Caliph. Golden age of Baghdad.

788 Beginning of the Idrisid dynasty in North Africa.

790 The manufacture of paper is introduced into Baghdad from China.

795 Death of Imam Malik bin Anas, after whom the Maliki school of Fiqh is named.

799 Zubaida, wife of Harun al Rashid performs the Hajj and builds rest houses for hajjis on the road.

Death of Imam Musa al Kazim.

800 Harun al Rashid and Charlemagne exchange ambassadors.

801 The city of Fez is established.

Charlemagne begins an invasion of Muslim Spain.

802 Death of Rabia al Adawiya, one of the most celebrated spiritual luminaries and a teacher of sufi masters.

809 Death of Harun al Rashid. Al Amin becomes the Caliph in Baghdad.

813 Al Mamun succeeds his brother Al Amin as the Caliph.

814 Death of Charlemagne. The Carolingian Empire in Europe begins to disintegrate.

815 Al Khwarizmi invents the science of Algebra and develops the mathematics of equations.

Viking raids from the North ravage Europe.

The Abbasid Empire begins a slow process of disintegration. The Idrisids in North Africa and the Tahirids in Persia become autonomous.

818 Death of Imam Ali al Rida.

820 Death of Imam al Shafi'i, after whom the Shafi'i school of Fiqh is named.

Rise of the Aghlabids in North Africa.

822 Music flourishes at the court of Cordoba under the musician al Zirhab.

The Aghlabid armies from North Africa invade Sicily.

827 Caliph al Mamun adopts Mu'tazilite doctrines as court dogma.

The Idrisids capture Crete, Sardinia and Sicily.

Caliph al Mamun establishes the Bait ul Hikmah (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad and encourages translation of Greek and Sanskrit books into Arabic. The Muslims develop concept of decimals in mathematics.

Muslims capture Palermo in Italy.

833 Death of Al Mamun. Al Mu'tasim becomes the Caliph and enlists

Turks into the army. 835 Death of Imam al Jawwad.

838 Umayyad armies from Spain occupy Marseilles, France.

840 Death of al Khwarizmi, mathematician, sufi shaykh.

842 Al Wathiq becomes the Caliph.

846 The Aghlabids in North Africa occupy Pisa and conduct a raid on Rome.

847 Al Mutawakkil becomes the Caliph; abandons Mu'tazilite doctrines.

848 850 Turkish influence in the Caliphate grows.

855 Death of Imam ibn Hanbal, after whom the Hanbali school of Fiqh is named.

861 Caliph al Mutawakkil is murdered. Al Muntasir becomes the Caliph.

866 Al Mu'taz becomes the Caliph.

868 Egypt becomes autonomous under the Tulunids.

Palermo, in Sicily, becomes a center of Islamic learning.

Death of Imam al Hadi.

870 The Zanj, workers from East Africa, revolt in Iraq. Death of Al Farabi and Al Kindi, noted men of science. Death of Al Tabari, renowned physician. The Muslims capture Malta. Al Mu'tamid becomes the Caliph in Baghdad.

874 Death of Abul Hussain Muslim, compiler of Hadith. Death of Imam al Askari.

Death of al Kindi, mathematician, astronomer.

Death of al Bistami, a leading exponent of Wahdat al Wajud.

875 Hamdan Karamat starts the Karamatian movement.

The Sassanids establish themselves in Bokhara.

878 Disappearance of Imam al Muntazar, the Twelfth Imam.

Beginning of belief in the hidden Imam.

880 The Aghlabids lose southern Italy to Christian forces.

882 A rebellion of the Zanj in Iraq is crushed.

885 Death of Dawud ibn Khalaf, expounder of the Zahiri school of Fiqh.

887 Peasant revolt in China against foreigners forces out the Muslims of Canton.

889 Death of ibn Kutaiba, historian.

890 Spanish Muslims re-establish bases in southern France and conduct raids into Switzerland.

892 Death of Muhammed al Tharmidi, historian. Al Mu'tadid becomes the Caliph.

893 The Karamatians capture Yemen.

898 Imam al Hadi Yahya establishes a Zaidi state in Yemen.

900 The Arabian Nights are compiled.

Improvements appear in the design and use of the Astrolabe. The Kharijites establish a dynasty in Sijilmasa, North Africa.

901 The Samanids emerge in Khorasan, Persia.

902 Al Muktafi becomes the Caliph.

903 The Karamatians plunder Damascus.

904 Muslim armies capture Solonika from the Byzantines.

907 Abu Abdullah, Fatimid leader, moves to North Africa.

908 Al Muqtadir becomes the Caliph in Baghdad.

909 The Fatimids establish themselves in North Africa. Ubaidulla al Mahdi becomes the first Fatimid Caliph.

910 Al Razi conducts research into infectious diseases including small pox, rabies and the plague.

912 Reign of Abdul Rahman III in Spain. Cordoba becomes the premier city of Europe. Golden age of Spain.

914 Nasr al Saeed of the Samanids in Khorasan favors the Fatimids over the Abbasids.

915 The Kharijites establish themselves in southern Morocco. The Fatimids raid Egypt.

922 Mansur al Hallaj, Persian mystic, is executed for his esoteric views. Beginning of the Tahirid dynasty in Iraq.

923 Death of Abu Tabari, noted commentator on the Qur'an.

924 925 Death of al Razi, doctor of medicine

929 In response to Fatimid claims to the Caliphate, Abdul Rahman III of Spain assumes the title of Caliph and protector of Sunni Muslims in North Africa.

930 The Karamatians raid Mecca and carry off the Hijr e Aswad from the Haram to Bahrain.

931 Abdur Rahman III occupies Ceuta. The Fatimids capture Algeria.

932 The Buyids establish their rule in southern Iraq. Al Qahir becomes the Caliph in Baghdad.

933 The Ishkedids displace the Tulunids in Egypt and rule until 969.

934 Al Radi becomes the Abbasid Caliph. Al Qaim becomes the Fatimid Caliph.

936 Death of al Ashari, theologian who reconciled Mu'tazilite doctrines with orthodox theology.

Abdul Rahman III of Spain captures Fraxinetum, Valais, Geneva, Toulon and Great St. Bernard.

Extensive postal services are established by the Abbasids. Al Muttaqi becomes the Abbasid Caliph.

945 The Buyids temporarily capture Baghdad.

946 Al Mutee' becomes the Abbasid Caliph. Al Mansur becomes the Fatimid Caliph.

950 Death of Al Farabi, noted sufi Shaykh.

951 The Ikhwan as Safa in Iraq compile an Encyclopedia of Knowledge.

952 953 Al Muiz becomes the Fatimid Caliph in North Africa.

955 Sharp naval engagements between the navies of Al Muiz and Abdul Rahman III off the coast of Spain.

957 Al Masudi, the historian, passes away.

961 Death of Abdul Rahman III.

The Oghuz family of Turks in Central Asia accepts Islam.

962 The Seljuk, Alaptagin, establishes a kingdom in Ghazna, Afghanistan.

968 The Umayyads establish a university in Cordoba.

969 The Fatimids conquer Egypt and establish the city of Cairo.

970 The Fatimids capture Syria, Mecca and Madina and lay claim to the leadership of the Islamic world. Fatimid rule in Multan (modern

Pakistan). Brisk trade between Alexandria, Egypt and Venice, Italy.

971 The Fatimids establish Al Azhar University in Cairo.

974 Al Ta'ee becomes the Abbasid Caliph.

975 Death of Al Muiz, Fatimid Caliph of Egypt. Al Aziz becomes the Fatimid Caliph.

Muslim astronomers publish manuscripts showing constellations of stars.

988 Count Vladimir of Kiev embraces Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

991 Al Qadir becomes the Abbasid Caliph.

996 Al Hakim becomes the Fatimid Caliph.

Pope Pious XI declares the Crusades against Muslims.

997 Mahmud succeeds Alaptagin in Ghazna and dominates Central Asia.

999 Large scale Turkish migrations into Central Asia. Kara Khani Turks occupy Bukhara.

Mahmud of Ghazna annexes Khorasan.

1000 Mahmud makes the first of seventeen raids into India. The Chinese use gunpowder to propel arrows.

1001 Mahmud starts campaigns to capture Peshawar, Bhera, Nagarkot, Tarain, Thaneshwar and Kanauj in India.

1004 Mahmud defeats Dawud, Fatimid ruler of Multan.

1016 The Christians reclaim Sardinia.

1017 Beginning of the Druze sect in Lebanon.

1020 Death of Firdowsi of Persia, author of Shah Nama. Mahmud establishes Lahore as the capital of Punjab. Death of Fatimid Caliph al Hakim who had claimed divinity.

1021 Al Zahir becomes the Fatimid Caliph.

Mahmud raids temple of Somanath in Gujrat, India.

Al Baruni publishes Kitab ul Hind, a penetrating study of the people of India.

1030 Death of Mahmud of Ghazna.

1031 The Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba disintegrates. Spain breaks up into petty emirates. The Christian kingdoms of Castile, Leon and Portugal position themselves to attack the Muslim territories.

Al Qaim becomes the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad.

1032 The Church of Constantinople breaks with the Church of Rome over the issue of icons in the Church.

1036 Taghril Beg becomes Seljuk Sultan.

Al Mustansir becomes the Fatimid Caliph.

1037 Death of Abu Ali ibn Sina, one of the greatest of physicians in history.

Ferdinand I, king of Castile, captures Leon.

1038 Death of Al Hazen, noted physicist.

1043 The Fatimid Empire begins to crumble. Mecca, Madina, Yemen and North Africa are lost by the Fatimids.

1048 Death of al Bairuni, historian, author of Kitab ul Hind.

1050 The Christians advance in Sicily.

1051 Beginning of the Murabitun revolution in West Africa.

1056 The Seljuk Taghril Beg and the Buyid Basisiri contest the control of Baghdad.

1058 Taghril Beg is anointed by Abbasid Caliph Kaim as “sultan of the east and the west” for his role in protecting the Abbasid Caliphate.

1060 The Seljuk Turks advance into Persia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The Crusaders raid the coast of North Africa.

1061 The Murabitun capture Morocco.

The Murabitun establish the city of Marrakesh as their capital.

1063 Taghril Beg dies childless. His nephew Alap Arsalan becomes the Seljuk sultan.

1068 Beginning of the Songhay Empire in West Africa.

1072 Battle of Manzikert. The Seljuk Turks under Alap Arsalan defeat the Byzantines under Emperor Romanus and open up Anatolia for Turkish

settlement.

The Christians capture Palermo in Sicily.

1075 The Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah retakes Syria from the Fatimids.

Al Muqtadi becomes the Abbasid Caliph.

1077 Birth of Abdul Qader Jeelani, celebrated sufi sage.

1085 Alfonso I of Castile captures Toledo, the ancient capital of Visigoth Spain. The extensive libraries of Toledo become accessible to Christian Europe.

1086 The Murabitun emir, Yusuf bin Tashfin, advances into Spain at the head of a powerful African force.

The Nizamiya College is founded in Baghdad by Nizam ul Mulk, grand vizier to Sultan Malik Shah.

1087 Yusuf bin Tashfin defeats Alfonso VI at the Battle of Sagradas.

The Crusaders sack Mahdiya in North Africa.

The assassin terror grows in Iraq and Syria.

1090 Al Ghazzali teaches at Nizamiya College, Baghdad.

The Crusaders capture Malta.

The assassins capture Alamut in northern Syria and establish a training center for fidees.

1091 End of Muslim presence in Sicily.

Smyrna in Anatolia becomes the Seljuk capital.

Death of Sultan Malik Shah.

The assassins murder grand vizier Nizam ul Mulk.

1094 Al Mustansir becomes the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad.

Al Mustadi becomes the Fatimid Caliph in Cairo.

1095 Pope Urban II declares a Crusade to take Jerusalem.

Al Afdal, grand vizier of Fatimid Egypt, recaptures Jerusalem from Turkish emir Duqaq of Damascus.

1096 The start of the First Crusade.

1097 Konya in Anatolia becomes the Seljuk capital.

The Turks retreat before the advancing Crusaders.

The Fatimids in Egypt start negotiations with the Crusaders to divide up Seljuk territories.

1098 The Crusaders capture Antioch.

1099 Jerusalem falls to the Crusaders. The Muslims and the Jews are massacred. Baldwin becomes king of Jerusalem.

1100 Al Ghazzali writes a powerful diatribe, Tahaffuz al Falsafa, against speculative philosophy. In Ihya al Uloom, he accords tasawwuf an honored position in Islamic sciences.

1101 Shaykh Abdullah Arif introduces Islam into the island of Sumatra, Indonesia.

1106 Death of Yusuf bin Tashfin, emir of the Murabitun.

1111 Abu Hamid al Ghazzali dies after transforming the intellectual landscape of the Islamic world.

1113 Maudud, a Seljuk officer from Mosul, defeats King Baldwin of Jerusalem.

1118 Al Mustarshid, Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad.

1123 Death of Omar al Khayyam, mathematician, mystic.

1124 Death of Hassan al Sabbah, leader of the Assassins.

1126 Archbishop Raymond establishes a school in Toledo to translate Arabic books into Latin.

1127 The Assassins murder Turkish officer Maudud.

1128 1130 Death of ibn Tumart, leader of the Al Muhaddithin.

1132 Roger II of Sicily invites Muslim scholars to work at his court.

1139 Birth of Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti, sufi sage.

1141 The Kara Kitai Turkomans defeat the Seljuks at Amu Darya.

The Seljuks, under Zengi, recapture Edessa. Pope Eugene declares the Second Crusade.

The Second Crusade collapses in Anatolia but succeeds in capturing Lisbon in Portugal.

End of the Murabitun rule in Andalus.

The al Muhaddithin capture Morocco. The assassins murder Seljuk Emir Zengi.

1149 Al Zafir becomes the Fatimid Caliph.

1150 The University of Paris is established.

1151 Al Idrisi constructs a map of the then known world.

1154 The Kurdish officer Nuruddin, in Seljuk service, takes Damascus.

Al Faiz becomes the Fatimid Caliph in Cairo.

1157 The al Muhaddithin capture Andalus.

1160 Al Mustanjid becomes the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad.

Al Adid, the last of the Fatimids, becomes the Caliph in Cairo.

1163 The Seljuks and the Crusaders compete for influence in Fatimid Egypt.

1166 Death of Shaykh Abdul Qader Jeelani of Baghdad, called Shaykh ul Masha'iq, founder of the Qadiriya sufi order.

Death of the geographer, al Idrisi.

1167 Establishment of Oxford University in England.

1170 Salahuddin takes Egypt from the Fatimids.

Al Mustadi becomes the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad.

1171 End of the Fatimid era. Egypt reverts to the Abbasid Caliphate.

1172 1173 Ghiasuddin Ghor established the kingdom of Ghor in Afghanistan.

1173 1175 Salahuddin consolidates his hold on Syria and Egypt.

Death of Ahmed al Rifai, founder of the Rifaiyah sufi brotherhood.

1177 Muhammed Ghor adds Multan, Uch, Dera Ismail Khan and Sindh to his dominions.

1179 Muhammed Ghori starts campaigns to capture Peshawar and Sialkot.

1182 Khwaja Muhammed Ghouse of Sindh introduces the Qadariya order into India and Pakistan.

1187 Battle of Hittin. Salahuddin triumphs and recaptures Jerusalem. Muhammed Ghori captures Lahore.

1188 Pope Clement III launches the Third Crusade.

1189 Khwaja Moeenuddin Chisti moves to Ajmer, India and establishes the Chistiya order.

1190 King Richard of England proposes a marriage between his sister and Saifuddin, brother of Salahuddin and for the two together to rule Jerusalem. The proposal is opposed by the Crusaders and is abandoned.

1191 Accra surrenders to the Crusaders after a long siege. Mohammed Ghori suffers a defeat at the Battle of Tarain and is forced to withdraw towards Kabul.

1192 Muhammed Ghori, victorious over the Rajputs, captures Delhi. Prithvi Raj Chauhan, ruler of Ajmer and Delhi is slain.

1193 Salahuddin passes away and is buried in Damascus.

1196 The al Muhaddith emir al Mansur defeats the Crusaders at the Battle of Alarcos.

1198 Death of ibn Rushd, of the great world philosophers.

1199 Pope Innocent III declares the Fourth Crusade.

1200 Islam takes roots in Indonesia.

Alauddin Muhammed becomes the Shah of Khwarazm.

The Crusaders capture Valencia.

Cambridge University is established in England.

1201 The Latin Crusaders sack Zara, a Christian city on the Adriatic.

1202 The Delhi Sultanate is established.

1203 Death of Nizami, well known Farsi poet.

1204 The Crusaders, led by Dondolo of Venice, sack Constantinople and loot its treasures.

Johan Shah, ruler of Sumatra, accepts Islam.

1205 The Turkoman Kara Kitai defeats Mohammed Ghori.

The Ghorids put down a rebellion in the Punjab.

1206 Genghiz Khan becomes the supreme ruler of the Mongol tribes.

The assassins murder Muhammed Ghori.

The Delhi sultans advance towards Bengal.

1211 Altumish ascends the throne of Delhi.

1212 The Crusaders defeat the al Muhaddith at the Battle of Las Novas de Tolosa.

1215 Genghiz Khan captures northern China; learns the use of gunpowder from the Chinese.

1218 The Fifth Crusade is directed against Egypt. The Egyptians open the Nile docks and drown the invaders.

1219 Genghiz Khan invades the territories of Shah Muhammed of Khorasan.

1220 Genghiz Khan devastates Central Asia.

1221 Genghiz Khan destroys Persia and Afghanistan.

Prince Jalaluddin faces the Khan at the Battle of the Indus.

1222 Genghiz Khan returns to Mongolia.

1223 Ibn al Athir, celebrated historian, passes away.

1227 Death of Genghiz Khan. The Mongols continue their advance through West Asia and Eastern Europe.

1228 The Sixth Crusade, directed at Egypt and led by Emperor Frederick II of Germany fails.

1230 Sundiata starts consolidation of the Empire of Mali.

1235 Baba Fareed of Lahore becomes heads of the Chistiya order in India.

1236 Cordoba, capital of Muslim Spain, falls to the Crusaders.

Razia rules as Queen of India.

Death of Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti of Ajmer, the most celebrated awliya of the subcontinent.

Al Mustansir becomes the Caliph in Baghdad.

1240 Death of ibn al Arabi, renowned sufi Shaykh.

Roger Bacon teaches in England.

1242 Al Musta'sim becomes the 37th and the last Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad.

1245 At the Council of Lyons, Christian Europe resolves to seek an alliance with the Mongols against the Muslims. A Franciscan priest, John de Plano Carpini, arrives at the Mongol court to seek military assistance.

1248 Seville in Spain falls to the Christians.

Ibn Ahmar starts the Nasirid dynasty in Granada.

1249 The Seventh Crusade, directed at Egypt by the Franks, is beaten back.

1250 Shajarat al Durr rules as Queen of Egypt.

1251 Hulagu Khan becomes the Mongol lord of Central Asia.

Hulagu Khan destroys the Assassins.

Death of Shaykh Saadi, celebrated Farsi poet.

Nizamuddin Awliya becomes head of the Chishtiya order in Delhi.

Islam spreads in India.

Hulagu Khan sacks Baghdad. End of the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad. The curtain falls on the classic Islamic civilization. Caliph al Musta'sim is killed.

Death of Ali al Shadhuli, founder of the Shadhuli sufi order.

1260 Kublai Khan ascends the throne of China. Many capable Muslims work at the court of the Great Khan.

Hulagu Khan storms Aleppo and massacres its inhabitants.

1261 The Mamlukes of Egypt install Al Mustansir as the Abbasid Caliph in Cairo.

The Mamluke, Zahir Baybars of Egypt, defeats a combined army of Mongols, Armenians and Crusaders at the Battle of Ayn Jalut.

1265 Death of Hulagu Khan.

1269 The Merinide al Yakub captures Marrakesh.

1273 Death of Jalaluddin Rumi, author of Mathnavi, the most celebrated of Farsi poets and founder of the Maulavi sufi order.

1274 Death of al Tusi, astronomer and inventor of the 2-axis gimbal. Emir al Yaqub of the Merinides defeats the Christians at the Battle of Ecija.

1277 Sultan Baybars defeats the Mongol armies at the Battle of

1278 Abulistan.

1279 Death of Sultan Baybars.

1289 The Mamlukes captures Acre, last Crusader stronghold in Syria.

1290 Sultan Malik Shah rules in Sumatra.

1291 Death of Shaykh Saadi, well known Farsi poet.

1294 Marco Polo returns to Italy from journey to the East.

1295 Ghazan the Great, the Il Khan Emperor, accepts Islam.

1300 Alauddin Khilji consolidates his empire over the subcontinent. Malik Kafur advances into southern India.

1301 Uthman Ghazi, founder of the Ottoman Empire, consolidates his holdings around Burs and Eskishehir; he defeats the Byzantines at the Battle of Yalakova.

The Mamlukes triumph over the Il Khans at the Battle of Marj as Suffar.

1307 Mansa Musa becomes emperor of Mali.

1316 Death of Alauddin Khilji, emperor of India.

1320 The Khilji dynasty in India collapses. Beginning of the Tughlaq dynasty.

1324 Mansa Musa performs his hajj with an entourage of 12000. Death of Amir Khusroe, famed sufi poet of India.

1325 Death of Nizamuddin Awliya of Delhi. Ibn Batuta begins his journey around the world.

1326 Death of Uthman I, founder of the Ottoman Empire. His successor Sultan Orkhan captures Bursa.

Death of ibn Taymiyah, noted scholar.

1333 Yusuf I becomes emir of Granada, breaks with Castile, forms an alliance with the sultan of Morocco and makes a last attempt to capture Spain from the Christians.

1334 Ibn Batuta arrives in Delhi.

Death of Shaykh Safiuddin Ishaq, after whom the Safavid dynasty of Persia is named.

1335 Death of Abu Said, Il Khanid Prince.

1340 The Yuan Emperor Toghon Timur of China sends an embassy to the court of Muhammed bin Tughlaq of India.

The Merinide navy defeats the Spaniards at the Battle of Tarifa.

1341 Death of Sultan ibn Qalawun of Egypt.

Ibn Batuta visits Sultan Malik al Zahir of Pasai, Indonesia.

The Black Plague devastates Europe.

1351 Death of Muhammed bin Tughlaq of India. The Tughlaq Empire begins to disintegrate.

1354 Ibn Batuta visits the Empire of Mali.

The Ottomans capture Gallipoli and Ankara.

1355 Ibn Batuta returns to Tangier. The Merinide Sultan Abu Inan authorizes the writing of the Rehla of Ibn Batuta.

The Genoese briefly occupy Tripoli, Libya.

1357 The Ottomans capture Erdirne.

1368 Timurlane, elected the leader of the Tatars, consolidates his hold on the valley of Farghana in Uzbekistan.

1369 Death of ibn Batuta.

1375 Dimitrius, Count of Moscow, wins a victory over the Tatar Golden Horde.

1376 The Golden Horde burns down Moscow.

1380 Timurlane begins his first campaign in Persia.

Shaykh Awliya Karim al Maqdam introduces Islam into Mindanao, the Philippines.

Kara Muhammed, leader of the Turkish tribe Kara Kuyunlu, establishes his kingdom near Mosul.

1381 The Ottomans capture Bulgaria.

1385 The Ottomans capture Thrace.

1387 Timurlane invades Russia and destroys the power of the Golden Horde. Russia begins its long march towards political consolidation.

1389 Bayazid I becomes the Ottoman sultan, defeats the Serbs at the Battle of Kosova.

Death of Hafiz, one of the greatest of Farsi poets.

Death of Bahauddin Naqshband, founder of the Naqshbandi sufi tareeqa of Bukhara.

1390 A combined French and Genoese force attacks Mahdiya, Tunisia.

1391 Bayazid I attacks Constantinople.

1396 Bayazid defeats the Crusader armies at the Battle of Nicopolis.

1398 Timur sacks Isfahan, Persia.

1399 Timur invades India, sacks Delhi, India. Castile sacks Tetuan, Morocco.

1400 Bayazid I lays siege to Constantinople.

1401 Timur defeats the Mamlukes of Egypt. Damascus surrenders to the Tatars. Timur sacks Baghdad.

1402 Timur defeats Bayazid I at the Battle of Ankara. Sulaiman I becomes the Ottoman sultan.

Sultan Iskander Shah expels the Thais from Malaya.

1404 Timur embarks on an expedition to China.

1405 Timurlane dies en route to China and is succeeded by his son Shah Rukh.

Note: Events from 1406 to 1924 are covered in Volume II.

GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS

(Note: The glossary is common to Volumes I and II) Arabic, Farsi and Urdu words are subtle and carry different shades of meaning, depending on their context and usage. We have offered here only a meaning consistent with the use of the word in this book. Many of the Arabic words are used, with some modification or accent, in all languages spoken by Muslims.

Adhan (Arabic), call to prayer.

Adl (Arabic), justice.

Ahadith (Arabic), plural of Hadith; confirmed sayings of Prophet Muhammed.

Ahl al Bait (Arabic), the family of the Prophet; a term usually reserved for Ali ibn Abu Talib, Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and their children Hassan and Hussain; referred to as Ahl e Bait in Farsi, Turkish, Urdu.

Ak Kuyunlu (Turkish), white sheep; the name of a Turkish tribe.

Akhbari (Arabic), a process in the Shi'a schools of Fiqh, which emphasizes the primacy of textual authenticity over methodology and principles (cf. Usooli).

Alavi (Arabic), descendants/followers of Ali ibn Abu Talib; a comprehensive term that refers to Muslims who follow the Shi'a tenets.

Alim (Arabic), a scholar.

Ammah (Arabic), the general population; the common folk.

Andalus (Arabic, Andalusia in Spanish), the Spanish peninsula.

Ansar (Arabic), residents of Madina at the time of the Prophet's Hijra (migration from Mecca to Madina).

Asabiyah (Arabic), primal cohesiveness based on kinship; a term used by Ibn Khaldun to connote tribal and racial cohesiveness.

Asharite, the doctrines of Ali Abu Musa al Ashari, a 9th century scholar; the “atomistic theory” of time under which time flows in discrete steps and the Will of God intervenes at every moment to determine the outcome of an event.

Ayah (Arabic), a verse from the Qur'an; Ayat in Farsi and Urdu.

Awliya, (Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), plural of wali; sages; protectors; friends of God; great sufis.

Awqaf (Turkish, Urdu), plural of Waqf; religious endowments.

Ayurvedic, (Sanskrit), a system of medicine from India.

Bahadoor (Tatar, Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), a brave man; an honorific title.

Bahar (Farsi, Urdu), Season of spring.

Baiyah (Arabic), pronounced Baiyat in Farsi and Urdu; oath of allegiance to a Caliph, Imam or Shaykh.

Bani Hashim (Arabic), the Hashimite tribe to which Prophet Muhammed and Caliph Ali ibn Abu Talib belonged.

Banu Umayyah (Arabic), the Umayyad tribe to which Caliph Uthman bin Affan and Emir Muawiya belonged.

Baraka (Arabic), increase; blessing; in common language, the baraka of good deed, or the baraka from a visit to the tomb of a shaykh; pronounced as barkat in Farsi and Urdu.

Batini (Farsi, Urdu), a school of thought, which accepts the view that one may conceal one's faith under conditions of extreme threat.

Beg (Turkish), pronounced Bayg, a governor.

Begler Beg (Turkish), Governor General, the governor of several provinces.

Begum, (Urdu), ladies of a royal household; princess; an honorific title.

Bida (Arabic), innovation in religion.

Bilalu Banuma (Mandinka), Bilal ibn Rabah, Companion of the Prophet.

Caliph (Khalifa in Arabic), the temporal and religious head of the Islamic community.

Caliphate (Khilafat in Arabic), a state headed by a Caliph; domain of a Caliph.

Dar al Islam (Arabic), the abode of Islam; in historic times, the regions where Muslim rule was prevalent.

Dar al Harab (Arabic), the abode of conflict; in historical times, the regions where Muslim rule was not prevalent.

Dayee (Arabic), a missionary.

Deccan (Urdu), the southern portion of India that jets into the Indian Ocean.

Deen al Fitra (Arabic), literally, the religion of pristine nature.

Deen e Ilahi (Farsi, Urdu), literally, the religion of God; a compendium of ethical standards compiled by Moghul Emperor Akbar in the 16th century.

Dhikr (Arabic), pronounced zikr in Farsi and Urdu; remembrance of God; in sufi circles, continuous recitation of the Name of God.

Dhimanah (Arabic), protection; trust; pronounced zimanat in Farsi, Turkish and Urdu.

Dhimmi (Arabic), a protected people; pronounced zimmi in Urdu.

Divan (Urdu), Prime Minister.

Emir (Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), a leader; also spelled Amir.

Emir ul Bahr (Arabic), admiral of the sea; the head of the naval forces.

Emir ul Momineen (Arabic), leader of the believers; a title for an emir who assumes the responsibility of protecting Muslims; a Caliph.

Fana (Arabic, Farsi, Urdu), annihilation; in sufi terminology, the annihilation of the human soul as it immerses itself in Divine Love.

Faqh'i (Arabic), a scholar of Fiqh; a judge.

Farman (Farsi, Urdu), a royal decree; a pronouncement.

Farsh (Farsi, Urdu), a carpet; a floor; the earth.

Farsi, the Persian language.

Fatimid, the dynasty that ruled Egypt and North Africa in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries; a follower of the Shi'a branch of Islam which believes in six Imams, the last of whom was Imam Ismail.

Fatwa (Arabic), a legal ruling by a qualified scholar.

Fidayee (Arabic), one who sacrifices himself; a martyr.

Fiqh (Arabic), jurisprudence; a rigorous and precise application of the Shariah to religious, social, political and economic issues.

Firangi (Urdu), from the word Frank; a person of European origin; in common usage it is a derogatory word.

Fitnat ul Kabir (Arabic), the Great Schism; the Shi'a-Sunni split that surfaced after the assassination of the third Caliph Uthman bin Affan.

Fuqaha'a (Arabic), Plural of Faqh'i; scholars of Fiqh.

Fustat, old name for the city of Cairo, Egypt.

Ghazal (Arabic, Urdu, Turkish), a love lyric, usually sung to the accompaniment of music.

Ghazi (Arabic), one who engages in Ghazza.

Ghazza (Arabic), to engage in armed struggle for the sake of faith.

Guru (Sanskrit), a teacher; a holy man.

Hadith (Arabic), verified and authenticated sayings of Prophet Muhammed.

Hafiz e Qur'an (Farsi, Urdu), one who has committed the entire Qur'an to memory.

Hajib (Arabic), a person responsible for keeping the Caliph separated (and sometimes concealed) from the common folk.

Hajj (Arabic), pilgrimage to Mecca, one of five pillars of Islam.

Hajji (Arabic), a pilgrim.

Hakam (Arabic), arbitration.

Hakim (Arabic), a person endowed with wisdom; a person who takes a holistic and integrative approach to learning.

Halal (Arabic), acceptable; sanctioned by Law.

Halqa (Arabic), a study circle.

Hamd (Arabic), a recitation in praise of God.

Hanafi, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Abu Haneefa.

Hanbali, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal.

Haram (Arabic), a sanctuary; a term applied only to the sanctuaries in Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem.

Hashashin (Arabic), assassin.

Hejaz, the western portions of the Arabian Peninsula where the cities of Mecca and Madina are located.

Hijab (Arabic), to hide; to conceal; to cover.

Hijra (Arabic), the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Madina in the year 622. It marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Hindustan (Hindi, Urdu), the peninsula in South Asia which contains the modern nations of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; also called Hind.

Hufaz (Arabic), plural of Hafiz.

Hujjah (Arabic), argument; disputation.

Ich Oghlans (Turkish), slaves in the Ottoman court.

Ihram (Arabic), a piece of unsown cloth worn by men during hajj.

Ihsan (Arabic), noble deed; commendable action.

Ijazah (Arabic), diploma; permission; pronounced ijazat in Farsi and Urdu.

Ijma (Arabic), consensus; a term used in jurisprudence to mean consensus of the Companions of the Prophet.

Ijtihad (Arabic), a legal process which allows a qualified scholar the latitude to apply independent judgment on an issue using rigorous and precise applications of the Shariah.

Ilm (Arabic), knowledge.

Ilm al Yaqeen (Arabic), knowledge with certainty, used in sufi circles for esoteric knowledge about the soul and its relationship to God.

Imam (Arabic), the religious and temporal leader of the Islamic community; the Imams in the lineage of Ali ibn Abu Talib; in general usage, a religious leader.

Imamate, the collective body politic of Muslims headed by an Imam.

Iman (Arabic), belief; faith.

Injil (Arabic), the Book revealed to Prophet Jesus.

Istihsan (Arabic), a legal process that allows the latitude of independent judgment within the canonical bounds of the Shariah.

Ithna Ashari (Arabic), Muslims who believe in Twelve Imams (cf. Saba'ee), the main branch among Shi'a Muslims.

Ja'afariya, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Ja'afar as Saadiq.

Jagir (Hindi, Urdu), a hereditary land grant from a king.

Jami Masjid (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), the principal mosque in a town; also pronounced Jamia Masjid.

Janissars (Turkish, Urdu), literally, those who are willing to sacrifice their lives; the elite corps in the Ottoman infantry.

Jazira (Arabic), an island; the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, Mesopotamia.

Jizya (Arabic), a tax paid by non-Muslims for exemption from serving in the armed forces of an Islamic state.

Jihad (Arabic), struggle.

Jihad al Akbar (Arabic), the greater jihad, against one's own evil inclinations; to cultivate the qualities of selfless service and moral rectitude.

Jihad as Sagheer (Arabic), the lesser jihad, against oppression and for self-defense.

Juma'a (Arabic), the obligatory Friday congregational prayer.

Ka'ba (Arabic), the sanctuary in Mecca, cubic in shape, first constructed by Prophet Abraham. It establishes the direction of prayer for Muslims

throughout the world.

Kadi (Arabic), a judge; pronounced kazi in Farsi, Turkish, Urdu.

Kafir (Arabic), one who conceals the truth, hence an unbeliever; sometimes spelled as kaffir.

Ka-khan (Mongolian), the Great Khan.

Kalam (Arabic), the sciences of the Qur'an; discourse; conversation.

Karavansarai (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), a place of rest for travelers.

Khadive (Turkish), Viceroy; Governor of Egypt.

Khan (Mongol, Tatar, Pushtu), a deputy; an honorific title.

Kamarband (Hindi, Urdu), a waist belt, usually studded with precious stones.

Kara Kuyunlu (Turkish), black sheep; the name of a Turkish tribe.

Karbala, a city in Iraq where Imam Hussain suffered his martyrdom. As an adjective it connotes extreme suffering and sacrifice in almost all languages spoken by Muslims.

Katib (Arabic), a scribe; usually, a scribe who copies the Qur'an.

Khan-Khanan (Mongolian), Prime Minister.

Khatib (Arabic), a scholar who gives the khutba (lecture) during Friday congregational prayers.

Kharijite, literally, those who walked away; a splinter group in the early history of Islam; a group with extreme views; a group responsible for the assassination of Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Khulfa e Rashidoon (Arabic), the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs: Abu Bakr as Siddiq, Omar ibn al Khattab, Uthman bin Affan and Ali ibn Abu Talib. The Sunnis believe in the Caliphate of the first four Caliphs.

Khutba (Arabic), the lecture given during the Friday congregational prayers.

Kitab (Arabic), a book.

Kotwal (Urdu), Mayor of a city during the Moghul period.

Ma'arifah (Arabic), knowledge; usually, knowledge of Divine love; pronounced Ma'arifat in Farsi and Urdu.

Madrasah (Arabic), school.

Maghrib (Arabic), the West; the North African states of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Tunisia. Before 1492, it also included Spain.

Maghrib al Aqsa (Arabic), the farthest western frontier, Morocco.

Mahal (Farsi, Urdu, Hindi), palace.

Malakat (Arabic), ownership.

Malakut (Arabic), market place.

Maliki (Arabic), a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Malik bin Anas.

Mallam (Fulani), religious teacher.

Mansab (Urdu), a land grant.

Mansabdar (Urdu), the owner of a mansab; in return for the mansab, he provided troops to the crown in times of war and collected taxes in times of peace.

Marabout (Hausa-Fulani), a religious teacher; a dervish; a sufi.

Maristan (Arabic), hospital.

Mausam (Arabic, Farsi, Urdu), climate, weather.

Mazhab (Arabic), a school of Fiqh; rigid adherence to a specific school of Fiqh.

Mehna (Arabic), persecution; inquisition.

Minjenique (Arabic), a mechanical catapult, perfected by Muslims to throw large payloads at a fortress; an assault engine.

Momin (Arabic), a believer.

Moor, from Latin, a person from Mauritania; a black person; a general term used by the Europeans for Muslims, especially the Muslims of Spain and Portugal.

Muezzin (Arabic), the person who chants the adhan (call to prayer).

Muhabbah (Arabic), love; divine Love, as used in sufi circles; pronounced Muhabbat in Farsi, Urdu.

Muhaddith (Arabic), a scholar of the sciences of hadith.

Muhajir (Arabic), Meccans who migrated to Madina in 622 along with the Prophet.

Mujaddid (Arabic), literally, one who makes things modern; a reformer.

Mujahid (Arabic), one who engages in a struggle, usually against oppression; plural, mujahideen.

Mullah (Arabic), a local religious leader.

Murid (Arabic), in sufi circles, one who desires knowledge; a follower of a murshad.

Murshad (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), a spiritual person; a sufi Shaykh.

Mu'tazilite, a philosopher; a rationalist; a follower of the Greek approach to knowledge.

Naat (Urdu), a poem in praise of Prophet Muhammed.

Nafs (Arabic), soul.

Nawab (Urdu, Hindi), a deputy; a governor; corrupted into nabob in English.

Nizam (Urdu), a deputy; a cabinet minister; hereditary title of the Nizams of Hyderabad, India.

Padishah (Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), ruler; king; sometimes, shortened into Pasha; also called badashah in Farsi, Urdu.

Pargana (Hindi), a county or district.

Pir (Farsi, Urdu), in sufi circles, a teacher; a person with spiritual qualities.

Qanun (Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), law; principles of law; canons of law.

Qawwal (Urdu), a reciter of qawwali; a singer of mystic poetry.

Qisas (Arabic), equitable retribution in cases of assassination and murder.

Qiyas (Arabic), a rigorous and precise application of the principles of jurisprudence by a qualified judge to a specific issue; to ponder; to think.

Qur'an (Arabic), revelation; the Koran; the Book revealed to Prophet Muhammed.

Qutub (Arabic), pole; tower; lighthouse; in sufi terminology, the shaykh who provides a focus for spiritual teachings.

Rafeeq (Arabic), an uninitiated recruit among the assassins of the 11th century.

Raga (Sanskrit), a musical scale; a composition.

Rehla (Arabic), travelogue.

Risala (Urdu), a regiment of troops.

Risalah (Arabic), a newspaper.

Ruh (Arabic), the spirit.

Rumilia (Turkish), an Ottoman province in the Balkans.

Sabaee (Arabic), Muslims who believe in seven Imams (cf. Ithna Ashari); a branch among Shi'a Muslims.

Sadr (Farsi), head; a religious head.

Sahel (Arabic, Farsi, Urdu), the coast; the Coast of the Horn of Africa.

Sahih (Arabic), authenticated, verified, confirmed, as in Sahih Hadith.

Sajda (Arabic), touching the forehead to the ground before God; prostration.

Salat (Arabic), the obligatory prayer. Muslims are enjoined to pray five times a day. The men, if they can, are required to pray in congregation.

Sama a (Arabic), a music recital by sufis, sometimes accompanied by ecstatic dancing.

Sanjak (Turkish), district.

Sanjakbey (Turkish), district administrator.

Sarkar (Farsi, Urdu), government; an administrative district.

Seerah (Arabic), path; example; the example of Prophet Muhammed; pronounced as seerat in Farsi, Urdu.

Shaft'i (Arabic), a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Shafi'i.

Shahada (Arabic), to bear witness; to be conscious; to recognize; to sacrifice; to recite the articles of faith.

Shariah (Arabic), the Divine Law as enjoined by the Qur'an.

Shaykh (Arabic), a learned man; a title of respect and honor.

Shi'a (Arabic), Muslims who believe that the legacy of the Prophet resides exclusively with the Ahl al Bait (family of the Prophet). The Shi'as believe that Ali ibn Abu Talib was the first Imam and Caliph of the Islamic community; also spelled Shia.

Shi'a of Ali (Farsi), the party of Ali ibn Abu Talib; also called Shi'at Ali.

Shura (Arabic), consultations.

Siasat (Farsi, Urdu), politics.

Silsilah (Arabic), a chain of transmission of knowledge.

Sipahi (Turkish, Urdu), a soldier.

Suba (Farsi, Urdu), a province.

Subedar (Urdu), the governor of a province.

Sufi (Arabic), a person who cultivates tasawwuf, a mystic; a person endowed with spiritual knowledge.

Suhaba (Arabic), the Companions of the Prophet Muhammed; also pronounced as Sahaba.

Su-ka-ra (Sanskrit), a sweet substance; root word for sugar.

Sultan (Arabic), king; emperor; sovereign; authority.

Sultanate, kingdom.

Sunnah (Arabic), example; usage is reserved for the example of Prophet Muhammed, although it is sometimes applied to the Sunnah of the Companions of the Prophet.

Sunni (Arabic), Muslims who believe that legitimacy of rule is established by a consensus of the community. The Sunnis believe in the Caliphate of Abu Bakr as Siddiq, Omar ibn al Khattab, Uthman bin Affan and Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Tabiyeen (Arabic), those who learned from the Companions; the second generation of Muslims after the Prophet.

Talbiyah (Arabic), harkening to the call of God, recited during Hajj.

Taluk (Hindi), county.

Talukdar (Hindi), county official.

Tanzeemat (Turkish, Urdu, Farsi), plural of Tanzeem; organization and discipline; a set of reforms in the Ottoman Empire in the 19 th century.

Taqiyya (Arabic), a principle that allows concealment of faith when faced with grave danger.

Taqlid (Arabic), to copy; to blindly follow a legal school.

Tareeqah (Arabic), methodology; in sufi circles, the methodology for acquiring spiritual knowledge; a sufi order.

Tasawwuf (Arabic), the science of purification of one's own soul; the spiritual dimension of Islam.

Taurat (Arabic), the Torah, the Book revealed to Prophet Musa (Moses).

Tawhid (Arabic), at the most elementary level, it means belief in one God; as a comprehensive term, it means a God focused civilization.

Ulema (Arabic), plural of Alim; scholars.

Ummah (Arabic), the collective body of Muslims; the followers of each Prophet are also called an ummah, for instance, the ummah of Prophet Moses or the ummah of Prophet Jesus.

Ummul Momineen (Arabic), Mother of believers, a term reserved for the wives of Prophet Muhammed.

Urdu, a language spoken in the India-Pakistan subcontinent.

Usooli (Arabic), a process in the Shi'a schools of Fiqh which emphasizes methodology and principle over textual authenticity.

Uthmanali, Ottoman.

Vizier (Farsi, Turkish, Urdu), Prime Minister; the chief executive functionary.

Wadu (Arabic), washing of hands, face and feet before prayer; ablution; purification of the body, also pronounced as wudu.

Wahdat al Wajud (Arabic), Unity of Existence; a doctrine of tasawwuf.

Wahdat as Shahada (Arabic), Unity of Witness; a doctrine of tasawwuf.

Wahhabi (Arabic), a puritan; a follower of Shaykh Abdul Wahhab.

Wali (Arabic), guardian; protector; a sufi shaykh.

Waqf (Turkish, Farsi, Urdu), a religious endowment.

Wilayat (Farsi, Urdu), a community of believers under the guardianship of a qualified Imam.

Yawm e Ashoorā (Farsi), 10th day of the month of Muharram; a day of mourning, especially among Shi'as.

Zahiri (Farsi), a school of thought, which prescribes that belief and action should be open and consistent with each other.

Zaidi, a school of jurisprudence based on the teachings of Imam Zaid; one who believes in the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, Omar and Ali but not of Uthman.

Zakat (Arabic), obligatory charity as sanctioned by the Qur'an, in general calculated at 2.5 percent of the surplus wealth; one of the five pillars of Islam.

Zamindar (Urdu, Hindi), a landlord.

Zanjir (Farsi, Urdu), shackles; a rope; derived from Zanj, a place near Zanzibar in East Africa from where a large number of workers were brought to Iraq in the 9th century.

Zawiya (Arabic), a sufi place of congregation used for dhikr as well as for community activities and social service.

Ziyara (Arabic), an offering, usually monetary, made to a shaykh, pronounced ziyarāt in Farsi and Urdu.

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